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ESSAYS AND STUDIES 1952

ESSAYS AND STUDIES

1952

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I

SIR JOHN CHEKE AND THE TRANSLATION OF
THE BIBLE

by HUGH SYKES DAVIES

IN the next few years one book will be (at any rate should be) opened rather more often than it has been—Fox's *Martyrs*. For we shall soon reach the fourth centenaries of the deaths of the Fathers of the Church of England, and shall have to decide whether to commemorate them or not, and if so, whether with admiration or obloquy. For the most part, their fate will be decided easily enough in the light of those great differences which have persisted among Anglicans from that time to our own day, and the modern followers of Stephen Gardiner will hardly bring themselves to recall with much pleasure the deaths of Ridley, Latimer, Cranmer and the rest, while the modern followers of Cranmer and all that he stood for will surely not fail to rejoice in the light of the candle that was lit at those fires. There is one man, however, whose natural place is among them as a notable leader of the English Reformation, whose life entitled him to a tribute in Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, but who, in his death, was not wholly among the *Martyrs*. This was Sir John Cheke, first Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, Provost of King's College, tutor to Edward VI, Secretary of State in Lady Jane Grey's reign of nine days. An exile for three years, he was kidnapped in the Low Countries by Catholic agents, and brought back to the Tower. After not much consideration, he chose submission rather than martyrdom. But his enemies turned his submission into a kind of minor martyrdom by extracting from him all manner of declarations and public confessions, upon one of which Archbishop Parker wrote in the margin the merciful and sufficient epitaph—"Homines sumus." It was generally believed among the Reformers that he died of grief at his own apostasy, and the indignities inflicted on him.

The modern representatives of his enemies may well wish to remember the death to which they hounded him—and their date will be 1957. But his friends, ancient and modern, would naturally prefer to remember his life rather than his death, and at some other date, even if there be some

difficulty in choosing it. If Cheke were being commemorated as a Reformer, his most memorable year was perhaps 1544, when he was summoned by Henry VIII from Cambridge to become tutor to Prince Edward; for this was the event which gave him, both then and afterwards, the influence on national policy which he never ceased to use in favour of the Reformation. On the other hand, if he were being commemorated as one of our earliest great scholars in Greek, the year should certainly be 1554, when he published at Basle the letters on the pronunciation of Greek which had passed between himself, as Regius Professor at Cambridge, and the Chancellor of the University, Stephen Gardiner. But if Cheke should be remembered chiefly for his services to the English language in one of its most formative periods, then the date would be 1550–51, for it was then, or thereabouts, that he made the translation of the Gospel according to St. Matthew which is the most remarkable of his few writings in his native language. At all events, whichever choice be made, there is much to be said for taking this opportunity of recalling this extraordinary version, and reminding ourselves of the problems which give it significance.

Cheke's position as the first polished scholar to turn his attention to English has been established beyond question since his own day, and it has recently been re-examined and confirmed in an admirable book by Miss Sweeting, which places him finally as the leading, the "seminal" mind among the early Tudor critics.¹ There is certainly no need to rehearse her conclusions, but some aspects of them need to be summarized before we can understand the full significance of the New Testament translation.

Cheke left so deep and clear a mark on his own age mainly in two ways. First, as a teacher at Cambridge in his twenties he wielded an almost magical power over his contemporaries and pupils; second, when he went to Court, he used his influence there to place these contemporaries and pupils in positions from which they, in their turn, could develop and apply the ideas of their teacher. Compared with his influence on other minds, the whole body of his writings is of small importance; he is one of those men whose greatness is the harder to recapture now because he taught more than he wrote, and left behind him men rather than books. It is, however, one of the natural compensations of life that such men produce pupils who are both willing and able to pay tribute to their masters, and hand down to posterity materials from which it is not hard to reconstruct their teaching. It must be remembered too that in the sixteenth century, the age of undergraduates² was much lower than it is

¹ *Early Tudor Criticism*, E. I. Sweeting, Blackwell, 1940.

now; a powerful teacher would impress them more deeply and more irrevocably because they were so much at his mercy, for good or ill. This impression, moreover, could only be made on young minds by a man of few and simple ideas, very clearly and very often repeated. And Cheke was just such a man. He had none of the wide-ranging curiosity and variegated speculation of a Coleridge:—fortunately, for Coleridge would have been able to give very little to the Cambridge of the sixteenth century. The main conceptions that concerned Cheke were few, simple, and closely knit together into an outlook, which could be, and was, effectively transmitted to his young pupils.

Among them, the ablest writer, and most faithful portrayer of his master, was Roger Ascham. In *The Schoolemaster*, Ascham gives what seems to be a careful, almost verbatim, account of one of Cheke's College lectures, from which we can gather more clearly than from any of Cheke's own writings his leading ideas:

“ My dearest frend, and best master that euer I had or heard in learning, Syr I. Cheke, soch a man, as if I should liue to see England breed the like againe, I feare, I should liue ouer long, did once giue me a lesson for *Salust*, which, as I shall neuer forget my selfe, so is it worthy to be remembred of all those, that would cum to perfite iudgement of the Latin tong. He said, that *Salust* was not verie fitte for yong men, to learne out of him, the puritie of the Latin tong: because, he was not the purest in proprietie of wordes, nor choisest in aptnes of phrases, nor the best in framing of sentences: and therefore is his writing, sayd he neyther plaine for the matter, nor sensible for mens understanding. And what is the cause thereof, Syr, quoth I. Verilie said he, bicause in *Salust* writing is more Arte than nature, and more labor than Arte: and in his labor also, to moch toyle, as it were, with an vncontented care to write better than he could, a fault common to very many men. And therefore he doth not expresse the matter liuely and naturally with common speach as ye see *Xenophon* doth in *Grecke*, but it is caried and driuen forth artificiallie, after to learned a sorte, as *Thucydides*, doth in his orations. And how cummeth it to passe, sayd I, that *Caesar* and *Ciceroes* talke, is so naturall and plaine, and *Salust* writing so artificiall and darke, whan all they three liued in one tyme? I will frelie tell you my fansie herein, said he: surely, *Caesar* and *Cicero*, beside a singular prerogatiue of naturall eloquence geuen, vnto them by God, both two, by vse of life, were daylie orators emonges the common people, and greatest rouncellors in the Senate house: and therfore gaue themselves to vse soch speach, as the meanest should wel vnderstand, and the wisest best allow: following carefullie that good councell of *Aristotle*, *laquendum ut multi, sapiendum ut pauci*. *Salust* was no socy man . . . *Caesar* being dictator, made him Pretor in *Nymidia* where he absent from his contrie, and not inured with the

common talke of Rome, but shut vp in his studie, and bent wholy to reading, did write the storie of the Romanes.”⁴

So deeply was this lesson fixed in Ascham’s mind, that he was careful to repeat the substance of it in his *Toxophilus* before he gave this fuller account of it:

“He that wyll wryte well in any tongue, muste folowe thyss councel of Aristotle, to speake as the common people do, to thinke as wise men do; and so shoulde every man vnderstande hym, and the iudgement of wyse men alowe him. Many English writers haue not done so, but vsing straunge wordes as latin, french and Italian, do make all thinges darke and harde.”²

And not only in Ascham’s mind had Cheke left this doctrine; it is found also, and again twice over, in the writings of another of his disciples, Sir Thomas Wilson, writer of our first *Arte of Rhetorique*. Here is the first version of it:

“Emong al other lessons this should first be learned, that we neuer affect any straunge ynkehorne termes, but so speake as is commonly receiued: neither sekynge to be ouer fine, nor yet liuyng ouer carelesse, vsyng our speache as most men do, & ordryng our wittes, as the fewest hauve doen.”³

The second is in a letter written in 1579 to another of Cheke’s old pupils, Sir William Cecil. This letter was prefaced to a translation of Demosthenes, and Wilson took the occasion to praise Cheke, and recall his liking for this author:

“Moreouer he was moued greatly to like Demosthenes aboue all others, for that he sawe him so familiarly applying himselfe to the sense and vnderstanding of the common people, that he sticked not to say, that none euer was more fitte to make an English man tell his tale praise worthily in an open hearing, either in Parliament, or in pulpit, or otherwise, than this onely Orator was.”⁴

Certainly Cheke had driven his point home; and many times must he have repeated it, to many pupils, many friends, varying sometimes the illustrations and examples, but never the main point that wisdom and knowledge however rarefied should never express themselves remotely, should as a matter of duty, as well as of style, place themselves at the

¹ Arber’s *English Reprints*, London, 1870, p. 154-5.

² Arber’s *English Reprints*, London, 1868, p. 18.

³ The passage is on p. 162 of Mair’s edition, Oxford, 1909.

⁴ *Olynthiacs of Demosthenes*, London, 1570.

disposal of the common people, by taking on a form that lay within the common understanding.

But it would be a great mistake to look upon these repetitions merely as the result of Cheke's insistence upon them, of his force of personality, and of the loyalty of his pupils and friends. None of these things would have sufficed to place Cheke's point where it stood, at the very heart of contemporary controversies about the use of language. For this, it was necessary that he should in fact have put his finger firmly and exactly on a main problem of his time, and offered a solution of it. To see the real magnitude of his work, it is needful to look for a moment at this problem, and to consider his solution.

The great linguistic problem of the sixteenth century was new not in its nature, but only in its acuteness. It had been inherited, indeed, from the time when the Norman Conquest suspended the existence of English as a national language, and left it untended, untaught, and almost unwritten to the common people, while the serious business of government, religion, thought and literature were carried on in French and Latin. During this period of rustication, English gained its great simplification of grammar; but at the same time it suffered an arrest, even a retrogression of vocabulary. The words which might have dealt with government, religion, thought and literature were not added to it, or even kept in usage, and when, in the later part of the fourteenth century the language again became a full mother-tongue, expected to cope with the whole range of human thoughts and feelings, this impoverishment of vocabulary became painfully clear, and a remedy for it was urgently needed. Two methods of enriching it were brought into wide use. First, there was straightforward borrowing from those fuller tongues which possessed the terms needed, chiefly French and Latin. Second, there was the modification of existing English words, either by expansion of meaning or new combinations, or any of the other ways in which a language can adapt itself to new needs, from its native resources.

The sixteenth century took over this problem still unsolved, indeed further from solution than ever because social and religious changes were combining to widen more rapidly than ever before the potential uses of English. The social changes were those that lay behind the invention of printing; the religious were those we may compendiously call the Reformation. Both tended in the same direction, to create a further and more rapid increase in the number of people who wished to read books, and who considered themselves entitled to understand and discuss whatever was written in English, whether or not they had received a clerical

education in Latin. For this new and wider reading public, it mattered a great deal what kind of English was to be used in the printed book. If it was to be an English full of borrowed terms, redolent of the learned languages, it would be of little more use to them than a book written in French or Latin. If, on the other hand, it was to be an English which represented the terms of theology and political thought common in Latin by means of adaptations of a purely English vocabulary, they would be able to hold their own. The problem was, in fact, to decide whether learned English should so far borrow from the older learned languages that it would effectively carry on the monopoly of culture which had hitherto been vested in Latin, or whether it should become a language open to anyone with the use of his native wits and his mother tongue.

This was the problem on which Cheke had put his finger so effectively, and to which he so emphatically gave the democratic, the Reformer's solution. The case he made out for it was all the more impressive because it came from one who was himself so incontestably learned in the ancient tongues, and because it was based upon the use of these tongues in their days of glory. His criticism of Sallust, for example, really implies something of this kind, in sixteenth-century terms: "this man wrote bad Latin, because it was recondite, studious, remote from the common people; good Latin was the language of men who wished to make themselves understood by the ordinary Roman. In the same way, bad English will be recondite, studious, clerkly, removed from the common people by its wealth of borrowed terms; and good English will be the language of men who genuinely desire to share their thoughts with the ordinary Englishman." Sir Thomas Wilson put exactly the same view, in simpler terms, when he said:

"either we must make a difference of Englishe, and saie some is learned Englishe, and other some is rude Englishe, or the one is courte talke, the other is countrey speach, or els we must of necessitee, banishe al suche affected Rhetorique, and vse al-together one manor of language."¹

It is, then, Cheke's great and incontestable achievement that he lent the whole weight of his immense influence and authority at this critical moment to English as a language fit to stand on its own feet, fit to be used, as he said. "cleane and pure, vnmixt and vnmangeled with borrowing of other tunges."² From him springs that attitude which runs

¹ On p. 164 of Mair's edition.

² *A Letter of Syr J. Cheekes To his loving friend Mayster Thomas Hoby*, prefixed to *The Book of The Courtier*, ed. W. Raleigh, 1900, p. 12.

through the minds of all who spoke of "inkhorn terms", and to him we owe it in no small measure that English did not indulge in such an orgy of borrowing that it would now be little more than a bastard Romance language.

But he himself planned to achieve even more, or to secure this in fuller measure. And he saw very clearly, as an earnest Reformer and a practised politician, that the future of English, and indeed of England as he saw it, would necessarily depend on the kind of language used in the printed translation of the Bible. Here, more acutely than anywhere else, would be fought the battle between those who wished to preserve in new forms the old clerical monopoly of learning, and those, like himself, who wished to throw learning as well as salvation open to the people. Among the papers in Archbishop Parker's Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, is the translation of St. Matthew and part of St. Mark to which we have already referred. It is clearly unfinished, even as it stands; but it is, even in this form, a remarkable sketch of what the English Bible might have been, had events turned out differently.

This manuscript was published in 1843 by James Goodwin, B.D., Fellow and Tutor of Corpus Christi College, together with an introduction which, if not fully recognizing the broader issues involved, at least examined carefully Cheke's actual practice as a translator, and left to succeeding scholars a clear account of his innovations in English. This table, showing how he kept his version free from borrowed words, is still the best of its kind:¹

| CHEKE | | WICLIF. 1380 | TYNDALE. 1534. | AUTHORIZED VERSION. 1611. |
|----------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| outpeopling, | ch.i.17 | transmygracioun | captivite | carying away. |
| wiseards, | ch.ii.16 | astromyens | wyse men | wise men. |
| moond, | ch.iv.24 | lunatik | lunatyke | lunaticke. |
| tollers, | ch.v.46 | pupplicans | publicans | publicans. |
| groundwrought, | ch.vii.25 | foundid | grounded | Founded. |
| hunderder, | ch.viii.5 | centurion | centurion | centurion. |
| frosent, note, | ch.x | apostlis | apostles | apostles. |
| biwordes, | ch.xiii.3 | parablis | similitudes | parables. |
| orders, | ch.xv.2 | tradiciouns | tradicions | tradition. |
| freshman, | ch.xxiii.15 | prosilit | (circumlocution) | proselyte |
| crossed, | ch.xxvii.22 | crucified | crucified | crucified. |

¹ The Gospel according to Saint Mathew, etc. Translated into English from the Greek, with original notes, by Sir John Cheke, Knight etc. James Goodwin. B.D. London: William Pickering. I. I. and I. Deighton. Cambridge. 1843. p. 15.

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out (though very disastrous to forget) that we are liable to find Cheke's terms both strange and unnecessary, because we are quite familiar with the borrowed words, but that the ordinary reader in the sixteenth century would have been in a very different position. Our familiarity with words such as "centurion", "apostle", "parable" and "proselyte" is due entirely to the Authorized Version, and even today it may be suspected that the word "publican" gives rise to many curious misunderstandings in the minds of the great majority of those who hear it. The actual course of history has been against him, and has turned into a mere philological curiosity what might have been a profound change in the whole direction of the language.

The obvious philological curiosity of these terms, moreover, has drawn so much attention to itself that little has been left for the other qualities of this version, perhaps less tangible and demonstrable, but of no less significance. It has, for example, besides these specially striking terms newly coined for particular purposes, a simpler range of more or less common English words, used where other versions, both earlier and later, brought in terms from French or Latin. It has also, as it seems to me, a pervasive directness and simplicity, almost a raciness both of words and of sentence-structure, which makes it more emphatically *vernacular* in tone than either Tyndale or the Authorised Version. These qualities can only be seen in considerable quotations, which I am the more willing to make because Goodwin's edition must now be inaccessible to most students of English. The following passages show Cheke at his most typical, and Tyndale's version is added as a measuring rod:

Cheke

Hord not yourself vp greet hoords on the earth, wheer nother moth nor rust can wast them, and wheer theeves mai dig vnto them and steel them. But hoord yourselves hoords in heaven, wheer nother moth nor rust can wast them, and wheer theves can not dig vnto them nor steel them. For wheer your treasur is theer be your harts.
(ch. 6, 19-21.)

Tyndale

Gaddre not treasure together on erth, where rust and mothes corrupce, and where theves breakes through and steale; But gaddre ye treasure togedder in heven, where nether rust nor mothes corrupte, and wher theves nether breake vp, nor yet steale. For whearesoever youre treasure ys, there are youre hertes also.

Theerfoor I sai vnto yow, be not thoughtfull for yowr life what ye eat or drink, nor for yowr bodi

Therefore I saye vnto you, be not carefull for youre lyfe, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drynke;

what ye put on. Is not your life of moor valew then food, and your bodi then clothing. look apon the birds of th' aier. Thei sow not, thei reap not, thei gather not into theer garners, and yowr hevenly father fedeth them. Be not yow much better then thei. Which of yow bi ani thought taking can put an half yard mete to his haight. And whi be ye thoughtful, for clothyng. learn how the lilies of the feld encrease, thei labor not, thei spin not, and yet I sai vnto yow, that Salomon in al his glori was not clothed lik on of thees. And if god doth clooth the gras of the ground, that this dai is, and to morow is cast into the furneis, how much moor ye smalfaited men, wil he cloth yow. Be not thoughtful theerfor, saieng what schal we eat, or what schal we drink, or what schal be clothed withal. For the hethen looketh for thees thinges. But seek first for the kingdom of god, and his rightuousnes, and al thees thinges schal be provided for yow besides. Be not thoughtful theerfor for to morow, for let to morow taak thought for itself. Eueri dai hath inough adoo with her own troble. (ch. 6, 25-34.)

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nor yet for youre boddy, what rayment ye shall weare. Ys not the lyfe more worth then meate, and the boddy more off value then rayment? Beholde the foules of the aier, for they sowe not, neder reepe, nor yet cary into the barnes; and yett youre heavenly father fedeth them. Are ye not better then they? Whiche off you though he toke tought therefore coulde put one cubit vnto his stature? And why care ye then for rayment? Beholde the lyles off the felde, howe thy growe. They labour not, nether spynn; And yet for all that I saie vnto you, that even Solomon in all his royalte was nott arayed lyke vnto one of these. Wherefore yf God so clothe the grasse, which ys to daye in the felde, and to morowe shalbe cast into the founrane, shall he not moche more do the same vnto you, o ye off lytle fayth? Therefore take no thought, saynge, What shall we eate? or, What shall we dryncke? or, Wherewith shall we be clothed? Aftre all these thynges seke the gentyls; for youre heavenly father knoweth that ye have neade off all these thynges. But rather seke ye fyrist the kyngdom of heven and the rightewesnes ther of, and all these thynges shalbe ministred vnto you. Care not therefore for the daye foloyng, for the daye foloyng shall care ffor yt selfe; eche dayes trouble yis sufficient for the same silfe day.

Then cam zebedais mother and her children vnto him, and sche bowed down herself, and asked a thing of him. What wilt yow said he vnto her. Comand saieth sche, that thec*z*eni ij sones mai sit th'oone of

Then cam to hym the mother off Zebedes children with her sonnes worshippyng him, and desyryng a certayne thyng off hym. He sayde vnto her, What wylt thou have? Graunte that these my two

Cheke

thy right hand and th' other of thy left hand in thy kingdoom. then answered Jesus ye know not saith he what ie ask. Can ie drink that cup that I schal drink, and be wasched with that wasching that I schal be wasched withal. We can sai thei to him. ye schall then drink mi cup saith he, and be wasched with that wasching wheer-with I am wasched awai, but as for sitting on mi right hand and mi left hand, it is not in mi power to give but vnto them to whom it is prepared for of mi father. And the x. heering yt, and thei weer greved with the ij brothern. And Jesus called them vnto him and said. Ye know that the princes of the hethen do overmaster them, and the greet men do overrule them. It schal not be so amongst iow, but whosoever wil be great amongest iow let him be iour waiter on, and whosoever wil be chief among iow let him be iour servaunt. even as the son of man cam not to be waited on, but to wait on other, and to give his soule for the raun-soming of the people.

(ch. 20, 20-28.)¹

Tyndale

sonnes maye sitt, one on thy right hond, and the other on thy liske honde, in thy kyngdom. Jesus answered and sayd, Ye wot not whatt ye axe. Are ye able to drynke off the cuppe that Y shall drynke of, (and to be baptised with the baptim that Y shalbe baptised with?) They answered to him, That we are. He sayd vnto them, Ye shall drynke of my cupe, and shalbe baptysed with the baptim that Y shall be baptysed with; but to syt on my ryght hond and on my lyft hond, is not myne to yeve; but to them for whom it is prepared of my father. And when the ten herde this they desdayned att the two brethren. But Jesus called them vnto hym, and saide, Ye knowe, that the lordes of the gentyls have dominacion over them, and they that are great, exercise power over them. It shall not be so amonege you; but whosoever wyll be greate among you, let hym be youre minister; And whosoever wilbe chefe, let him be youre servaunt. Even as the sonne off man cam not to be ministred vnto, butt to minister, and to geve his lyfe for the redemp-cion off many.

The comparison can be left largely to speak for itself, but it needs perhaps this reminder: we are so accustomed to the words and rhythms of Tyndale's translation, through the Authorised Version, that a positive effort is needed to give a fair hearing to other words and other rhythms. If this effort is made, however, there can surely be no doubt that Cheke, both in his choice of words and in his phrasing, had achieved in great measure that simplicity, that approximation to the actual speech of the

¹ In transcribing Cheke I have retained his spellings, but filled out the contractions. I did not wish to make the impression of his version any stranger than was necessary to my present purpose.

common people, for which his views on the English language led him to seek. To take but one phrase, "Each day hath enough ado with her own trouble," is surely more racy, more genuinely vernacular, than either Tyndale's "eche dayes trouble is sufficient for the same self day," or the Authorised Version's "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Had Cheke's theories and example enjoyed a greater influence on later translations of the Bible, we might well have had a version much more genuinely colloquial, less learned in tone; and such a version would have exercised as important an influence on the whole history of the language as our present Version has done, but in a different direction.

The course of events, however, was otherwise. Cheke's translation lay unread and unheeded among the Archbishop's papers, and of all the versions made before that of 1611, it had the least influence on the future. Yet to recall it now is to do something more than to amuse ourselves with an historical curiosity. For it serves to show rather more clearly the actual character of the Authorised Version itself, and of its influence on the use of English. The translators of 1611 well knew what they were about; they were aware of the two extremes of language, one remote from popular usage and full of borrowed terms, the other based on the vernacular, making new compounds where no English words could be found. And in a spirit of compromise which was altogether typical of their Church, they deliberately chose to make their path midway between the extremes. As their Preface put it:

"wee haue on the one side auoided the scrupulositie of the Puritanes, who leauie the olde Ecclesiasticall words, and betake them to other, as when they put *washing* for *Baptisme*, and *Congregation* in stead of *Church*: as also on the other side we haue shunned the obscuritie of the Papists, in their *Azimes Tunike*, *Rational*, *Holocausts*, *Praepuce*, *Pasche*, and a number of such like, whereof their late Translation is full, and that of purpose to darken the sence, that since they must needs translate the Bible, yet by the language thereof, it may be kept from being vnderstood. But we desire that the Scripture may speake like it selfe, as in the language of *Canaan*, that it may bee vnderstood euen of the very vulgar."¹

Their profession was surely more than their practice here. "Understood of the very vulgar" their Version has never been, for though it indeed avoided such use of the "olde Ecclesiasticall words" as darkened the

¹ I omit references, since the pagination of editions varies so greatly. The passage will be found at the close of the penultimate paragraph.

Rheims New Testament, it kept enough of them to create many difficulties for any reader without a tinge of letters. And this Anglican compromise over the English of the Bible has exercised a formidable influence over the whole subsequent development of the language. The whole weight of its authority, its iterated ring in the ears of Englishmen, has operated in favour of a vocabulary with a considerable borrowed element, and against a pure vernacular such as Cheke desired. The Authorised Version, in fact, is one, and not the least, of the factors which have made English irretrievably a mixed language, with all the special benefits and disadvantages of such a mixture. And it is perhaps the best reason for remembering Cheke's version that it reveals the Authorised Version so clearly in this light.

II

THE TEMPEST

by BONAMY DOBRÉE

So much has been written in the last few years about the plays of Shakespeare's final phase, in a general re-interpretation which amounts almost to rediscovery, that we are in danger of having a veil interposed between us and whatever it is that Shakespeare may have to show. I confess that after studying some of these, and feeling myself more and more bewildered and inadequate, I comfort myself by reading that admirable Dialogue of the Dead in which Fontenelle makes *Æsop* and *Homer* talk together. You will remember that when *Homer* congratulates *Æsop* upon artfully packing so much morality into his fables, *Æsop* says:

Il m'est bien doux d'être loué sur cet art, par vous qui l'avez si bien entendu.

Homère. Moi ? je ne m'en suis jamais piqué.

Æsope. Quoi ! n'avez-vous pas prétendu cacher de grands mystères dans vos Ouvrages ?

Homère. Hélas ! point du tout.

and so on, in entertaining elaboration. But, of course, the great work of a great master, besides being an object in itself, is also a receptacle for what each individual person can put into it, and will be reinterpreted by every age. But recent essays upon these later dramas has made it extremely difficult for us to be absolutely honest in our own approach: because these plays, being, it is fairly safe to say, Shakespeare's deepest and perhaps final religious statement—using religion in its broadest sense as an apprehension of what life is about—that many writers have sought, and found, their own beliefs about Shakespeare in them, even their own religious beliefs, and used them to propagate their own gospels. Thus it is extremely hard for us to see the object as it really is—for ourselves. Only too often with these plays, the criticism of others, instead of removing barriers as it should, merely interposes fresh ones.

Nevertheless there are certain broad statements we can make, and the first is that *The Tempest* cannot be considered apart from the other three

of this phase, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and, to my mind the greatest of all these miracles, *The Winter's Tale*. To state their scope briefly I cannot do better than quote Professor Kenneth Muir:

It is impossible to doubt that the form of the last plays was determined by [I would prefer to say adapted to] the new vision which Shakespeare wished to express. The centre of this vision was a belief in the necessity for forgiveness, the conviction that 'the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance'. As Murry suggests, Shakespeare had realized, as Tchekov was later to do, that 'since we are forgiven it would be strange not to forgive'. The other characteristics of the plays of the last period arise from this necessity of forgiveness. Without love forgiveness is meaningless: and with forgiveness must come the reconciliation of the estranged, the restoration of the lost, the regeneration of the natural and sinful man, the birth that is a symbol of rebirth, and the conquest of death by the acceptance of the fact of death.

This is an excellent compaction of the themes: but you will have noticed that it doesn't quite fit *The Tempest*, especially as he adds 'These things take time'. And it does not quite fit because also—and this is the thesis I would like later to develop tentatively—Shakespeare was moving on from those themes to others, which might perhaps tacitly include these, but would be different from them. There can be no doubt, however, that *The Tempest* is closely linked with this group which is concerned with a loss or losses which seem to be death, with repentance, followed by reconciliation (after a 'recognition' scene), and by forgiveness, with, as Mr. Muir also says, the sins of the fathers being healed by the children. Besides containing a very unusual number of ideas adumbrated in other plays, its structure shows more plainly than any other of Shakespeare's dramas, the storm or tempest as a symbol of turmoil with music as the healing, harmonizing influence, a structure which Mr. Wilson Knight¹ pointed out so convincingly and so long ago, that we tend to accept it, unacknowledged, as a commonplace.

But though the play belongs to this group, and is sometimes hailed as the most perfect of them all, I for one do not feel that the old intuitions have the old force: it seems to me that the poignancy of loss, and repentance, reconciliation or forgiveness—call it grace if you like—were more convincingly brought home in the other plays, certainly in *The Winter's Tale*. I would like to suggest that the treatment of the old themes of this group is a little perfunctory. For instance, is there not a somewhat nasty

¹ *The Shakespearian Tempest*.

taste about the quality of Prospero's forgiveness? Is it not Senecan, rather than Christian? "It is the part of a great mind to despise injuries," Seneca says in his essay on anger; "and it is one kind of revenge to neglect a man as not worth it." This seems to me exactly Prospero's sentiment with regard to Alonso. It is Ariel who has to remind him of pity and tenderness, and even then Prospero appeals to his 'nobler reason', and rather priggishly performs what he thinks is a 'rarer' action. And after all, it is easy enough to forgive your enemies when you have triumphed over them. When he speaks to Antonio, he may use the *word* forgiveness, but does he feel the emotion?

For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother
 Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive
 Thy rankest faults—all of them; and require
 My dukedom of thee, which perforce I know,
 Thou must restore.

Does that sound like forgiveness? Is that how you would speak to a man whom you love as you forgive him? Nor can it be said that any of *the* three men of sin—Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio—repent. What happens to them is that they are frightened out of their wits by Ariel's speech at the banquet. The most that Gonzalo can say is:

All three of them are desperate: their great guilt
 Like poison given to work a great time after,
 Now 'gins to bite the spirits:

and even that is only words. For Alonso feels not repentance, but regret, because his action has lost him his son. As for Sebastian, he says he'll fight hard—one fiend at a time—and Antonio says he'll second him. There is only stubbornness there. Repentance and forgiveness seem to remain as fossils in the play, rather than as active principles. Loss and recovery certainly are there in Alonso's and Ferdinand's loss of each other; the sins of the fathers are redeemed by the children: those themes are fully stated, especially the last. But yet, with how much less power than in the other plays, with less rapturous poetry! I would ask you to compare the love speeches which Ferdinand addresses to Miranda with those which burst from Florizel as he woos Perdita. The former have amazement, but they lack warmth.

Or take one more difference between this play and the others, which if *this* were really of *the* same sort, would make it a much weaker play:

I mean the great flower-pieces, such a marked feature in the other three. Let me remind you just of the one in *The Winter's Tale*:

. . . Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take
 The winds of March with beauty; violets dim
 But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
 Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses
 That die unmarried ere they can behold
 Bright Phoebus in his strength, — a malady
 Most incident to maids; bold oxlips and
 The Crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,
 The flower de luce being one . . .

What do we get in *The Tempest*? All we find in the body of the play is Prospero's remark to the elves:

you demi-puppets, that
 By moonshine do the green-sour ringlets make,
 Whereof the ewe not bites: and you whose pastime
 Is to make midnight mushrumps . . .

a somewhat grim and sterile vision. And in the Masque all we get is a strictly utilitarian catalogue—wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats and pease—from Iris; and from Ceres some lines about barns and garners, and plants with goodly burden bowing: all very proper for a fertility rite, such as the Masque was, but this is not the passionate adoration of the loveliness of nature. Unless we accept the postulate of a bored and wearied Shakespeare—and therefore think the play a failure (and it is emphatically not a failure)—we must assume that Shakespeare was not writing about the sort of thing he had embodied in the other plays of the group. ✓

And if this group has also as one of its themes the regeneration of natural and sinful man, what are we to make of Caliban whom those who think in this way regard as the only too sinful and natural man? For the moral of the story—if the story must have a moral—is that he cannot be regenerated: he is

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
 Nurture can never stick :

he must be kept in order by being hunted, pinched, tortured with cramps. True, he says at the end, when ordered to tidy up Prospero's bedroom—“I will be wise hereafter and seek for grace”—because he realizes he was a fool to follow a god with a bottle. We are not impressed. Again, the

natural man in Ferdinand, apparently, can be kept in check only by threats: Prospero warns him against pre-nuptial love in words which suggest Lear's curse of sterility upon Goneril. This may have been to please James I; but what Shakespeare seems to be suggesting—or at least Prospero suggests here and in other places—is that the natural instincts have constantly to be disciplined, scourged, whipped: they cannot be integral to regenerated man. It is true that Ferdinand brings in a somewhat sweeter atmosphere by saying that nothing will ever turn his honour into lust, but that does little to freshen the general impression made by Prospero's scolding.

If I have taken you with me so far, you will conclude that though *The Tempest* is closely related to the other three plays—*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*—it cannot be grouped with them; it is not a symbol of the same sort of attitude, of sentiment about life, which infuses and informs the other plays. What I would like to suggest is, that though to a large extent Shakespeare felt the mood of those other plays, he was no longer dominated by it, and was moving on to other things. He is not denying the intuitions of the other plays, but having expressed them he was not, as artist, interested in them so wholly as before: they are there, but perfunctorily stated, and a little flatly, as the background from which something else is emerging, to modify what he said earlier. But the play is so extraordinarily complex, and exists on so many levels, that what may seem important on one level scarcely exists on another. ✓

But—and I would like to stress this—we must not forget that we are, after all, judging a stage play to which an audience could not be expected to come with their minds stored with the author's previous work. And it seems to me, that together with so much richness, certain themes are emerging which had not previously been very evident, and that these tend to thrust into the background the themes common to the group of late plays: and these are, destiny, the nature of reality, and, as Mr. Muir stresses, freedom. I, for my part, do not want to lay too much stress on these elements, especially the first, that of destiny: all I want to affirm is that they are parts of a very complex whole, and that by treating them a little separately we may be able to account for certain aspects of the play which if it is considered as one of the same sort as, shall we say, *The Winter's Tale*, appear as blemishes.

But before going on to discuss the themes themselves, I would like to touch upon the problem of stage illusion which all this group of plays offer in an acute form. They are, of course, utterly unrealistic poetic drama; the suspension of our disbelief must be practised constantly and

whole-heartedly. In this play particularly, we have to accept, to live in, so to speak, another dimension of time. Let me give one instance. I read in an article the other day (Mr. Traversi in *Scrutiny*, June 1949) that, by the beginning of Act III, the sufferings of Ferdinand and Miranda had cemented their devotion. Now devotion implies a certain length of time, so that realistically that is absurd. They had known each other for about an hour and a half, and their suffering had been of the slightest: even Ferdinand's grief for his father had been promptly put aside. Yet we may find that the statement fits in with our notion of what the play, at least to some extent, is about. We accept the fresh reality. But Shakespeare knew that you cannot stretch fantasy too far; so from the very beginning gave his audience the security of an intellectual setting they were familiar with—nothing so strange as ancient Tyre or Roman Britain or Illyria—but, on an island such as was being discovered every day, a sort of Bermuda, the familiar figure of the magus. As the late Professor Kittredge wrote:

Prospero, to the Elizabethan audience, was as comprehensible in his feats of magic as a chemist or an electrical engineer is to us moderns . . . [Prospero] belonged not only to a conceivable category among men, but to an established category.

Just as Marlowe in *Faustus* had presented a necromancer who dealt in black magic, a being his audience perfectly understood, so here in Prospero is one dealing in white magic, as did in actual life Shakespeare's contemporary, Dr. John Dee. Prospero was, in the manner of Dr. John Dee—but, we imagine, far more effectively—controlling certain forces of nature.

In this setting, with this magus, nothing that can happen on this island is incomprehensible: even Ariel is a natural force—his name is common in charms and invocations of the time. This then is a realistic story, not a fairy-tale such as *Midsummer Night's Dream*: it is not on such obvious ground as that that Shakespeare is to discuss reality and unreality. Caliban, again, is not the sort of monster the Jacobean would regard as an invented or fantastic figure: travellers' tales of wild men of this sort went on down to well into the eighteenth century. Thus in a sense this play would be easier to 'believe'—as one believes stage plays—than any of the other three. What I am trying to suggest is, that here Shakespeare was giving himself as solid a framework as he could so as to have within it the maximum of freedom possible.

And with what amazing nimbleness he moves from one plane of

reality to another (I am adopting Dr. Tillyard's expression), first of all, from one set of people to the opposite one, from the upper classes to the lower (to put it that way), which, seeing what they are, is no small feat. For the upper classes—especially Ferdinand, Miranda, Gonzalo and Alonso (more about Prospero soon) correspond with what Mr. T. S. Eliot has said about the characters in the romances, as being “the work of a writer who has finally seen through the dramatic action of men into a spiritual action which transcends it”; but the more materialistic people, Caliban, Stephano, Trinculo and the sailors have all the outward dramatic solidity of Shakespeare's usual figures, while Antonio and Sebastian form a link between. There is a delightful and rich earthiness about the lower group—the poet among them being Caliban—and base as they are, they are drawn with the loving realism which makes all Shakespeare's children of the lower nature so immensely likeable. Antonio and Sebastian are too puppet-like to be of any interest, as they had to be lest they should become too interesting: but when we move to the upper group the figures, as realistic figures, are pallid in the extreme. They are the dullest *jeune premier* and *jeune première*: Ferdinand is a very ordinary nice young man; the insipid young chit of fifteen that Miranda is can hardly interest us on the page (however much she might stir us in life or in the theatre). Even Prospero cannot let pass her remark “Oh brave new world that has such people in it”, seeing that the people she is mainly referring to are the three men of sin: he has to say a little acidly “'Tis new to thee”—which, incidentally, shows how far Prospero believed in ‘regeneration’! The ‘upper’ characters, in short, live on an utterly different plane of reality from the ‘lower’ ones: but this is only a sort of outer case in which the theme of the real and unreal is contained.

For the one which Shakespeare is toying with—I don't think it is more than that at this stage—is “What is reality? Is it something that we can judge of by the evidence of our senses?” The ultimate form of this question, which is touched upon only in Prospero's cloud cap'd towers speech, may be “Is there a quite different reality behind experience?” But short of that question, Shakespeare seems to be inducing in us this sense of the unreal to give a shimmering effect to this curious and delightful object he offers us: it gives us that peculiar sense of detachment which it seems to be one of his objects to achieve—if an effect on his audience was, as he wrote, at all in his mind. Every now and again the people in the play are deluded as to what they see, or see only what they wish to see, or even see what is not there. All the time there is a suggestion of unreality, of living in a dream world. Miranda, for example, saw the

ship sink—and so, it turns out later, did the rest of the fleet: the garments of the shipwrecked people are fresher than before, in spite of their drenching in the sea (it is true that there had to be some explanation on the realistic plane!); there is constantly a mysterious music—Ferdinand cannot tell whether it be in the air or the earth, and soon his spirits “as in a dream are all bound up”, spell-bound by Prospero. Or take the little passage near the beginning of the second act:

Adrian. The air breathes upon us here most sweetly.
Sebastian. As if it had lungs, and rotten ones.
Antonio. Or, as 'twere perfumed by a fan.
Gonzalo. How lush and lusty the grass looks! how green!
Antonio. The ground, indeed, is tawny.
Sebastian. With an eye of green in't.

Which is right in their sense of reality? Is not each making his own according to his temperament? “The quality o' the climate” makes some drowsy and the spirit of others more active. Caliban lives in a world inhabited by spirits, and for him the island is full of noises, some of them ravishing, while Ariel causes the utmost confusion in the conversation of Caliban with Stephano and Trinculo. At the end Gonzalo is utterly astray between the real and the unreal: as Prospero tells him

You do yet taste
 Some subtleties o' th' isle, that will not let you
 Believe things certain,

while Alonso fears that the Ferdinand whom he sees may prove ‘a vision of the island.’

All the while the shimmer is there, quite apart from the scenes of magic, the banquet which vanishes, the appearance of Ariel as a harpy, the masque, with all the attendant bewilderments, out of which arises Prospero's great philosophic speech. It is true that in the *Earl of Stirling's Tragedy of Darius* Shakespeare had read

... let this worldly pomp our wits enchant
 All fades and scarcely leaves behind a token...
 Those stately Courts, those sky-encountering walls
 Evanish all like vapours in the air

but if Shakespeare borrowed a little of the imagery, the thought is a commonplace made actual and vivid, a truth imaginatively grasped by the power of the poetry of a man who for the moment at least felt it all with the assent of an intuition. The whole sense of insubstantiality is there, one that all of us have probably felt at some time or another with varying

keenness. All of us feel sometimes, perhaps hope, that we are such stuff as dreams are made on, and welcome the relief of thinking that our little lives are rounded with a sleep. Thus for a certain part of our apprehension the play gathers momentum up to this point, and after that flows away from it.

But for a certain part only, for interwoven with the theme is one almost contrary; since Fate and destiny can hardly be said to apply to shadows; yet the theme is there. In the very first scene Gonzalo says of the boatswain: "Stand fast, good Fate, to his hanging, make the rope of his destiny our cable," a jesting reference, yes: but the words are there to make an impact on our consciousness. This is somewhat waveringly supported in the next scene. It was 'Providence divine'—which we may equate with destiny—that had brought Prospero and Miranda ashore; and then we learn that 'bountiful Fortune' (not of course chance, in our sense, but the inescapable Wheel of Fortune familiar to the mediæval mind) had brought Prospero's enemies to the island; and Prospero tells Miranda that

by my prescience
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star, whose influence
If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop:

Antonio next, when egging Sebastian on to murder, appeals somewhat confusedly to destiny. But of course, the grand statement comes in the speech Ariel makes when as a harpy he sweeps away the feast offered to the bewildered travellers. It is phrased with very special power, placed so that we cannot but notice it:

You are three men of sin, whom destiny,
That hath to instrument this lower world
And what is in't, the never-surfited sea
Hath caused to belch up . . .

It is curious, by the way, that Ariel uses some of the coarsest imagery in the play, Caliban some of the most ethereal; but that is another issue. Ariel goes on:

. . . You fools! I and my fellows
Are ministers of fate,

and later he informs the men of sin that:

The powers delaying, not forgetting, have
Incensed the seas and shores—yea, all the creatures
Against your peace.

So the idea is stated—not indeed very emphatically, since we, the audience, know that Ariel is pretending, play-acting, speaking the part Prospero told him to. Nevertheless something has happened in our minds; and perhaps when Ferdinand a little later says that Miranda is his 'by immortal Providence', we may be a little inclined to believe him, though we know that it came about largely by Prospero's contrivance. The element must not, I think, be stressed; but it is there.

The last thread, that of freedom, is more insistent. It runs through the whole of the Ariel part, as I need not remind you; again and again he asks when he shall be free; again and again Prospero promises him his freedom. We are never allowed to forget it. At first, with Caliban, we hear of the opposite: he is 'slave Caliban'. But he has his aspirations: one of the notes in the play that everyone remembers is his

'Ban 'Ban, Ca-Caliban

Has a new master—get a new man.

Freedom, high-day! high-day, freedom! freedom, high-day, freedom!

as he leads Stephano and Trinculo to a happier state of life. Poor wretch, prototype here, perhaps, of the wretchedest mob, incapable of scepticism and so always deluded, believing ever that a change of masters will mean greater freedom for the man, and ever disillusioned. That interpretation need not detain us. Ferdinand, who tells us early (a romantic commonplace)

Might I but through my prison once a day
Behold this maid, all corners else o' th' earth
Let liberty make use of, space enough
Have I in such a prison

later finds freedom in the service of Miranda. The play ends with the idea of freedom, of release (the opposite, we note, of Fate or Destiny), with Prospero saying to Ariel, "Be free and fare thou well:"—the last line of the epilogue which cannot but ring in our ears, being

Let your indulgence set me free.

That then ends the play, composed throughout so musically, with a lovely diaphaneity of verse scarcely distinguishable from the beautifully flexible prose, itself almost verse, that gives a kind of iridescent effect to this gracious object: and what I want to suggest is that in it Shakespeare was using for fundamental material, not so much the moral intuitions of repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and so on; but the metaphysical

intuitions of fate and freedom, of appearance and reality. Perhaps that is what Mr. Eliot meant. And out of these he spun the enchanting fable, a kind of transparent object which, if we will let it, may set, us also, a little more free.

But is there not more? the question will be asked. Have we not here in Prospero, Shakespeare himself taking his farewell of the stage? I fear that some confusion has been caused by this ingenious conjecture, born some two hundred years after the play was acted. Perhaps as he wrote some of the passages a certain metaphorical resemblance between him and Prospero struck him whimsically, and he developed it a little, especially in the notorious farewell passage, which was a piece of common material about magicians he took almost verbatim from some lines in Golding's Ovid,¹ and, as usual transformed. Surely he would not have wished the likeness pushed too closely, in view of what Prospero is—a philosopher King, who like his prototype in *Measure for Measure* was a disastrous ruler; a somewhat cruel, uncertain-tempered man, who far from renouncing anything, was going back to the enjoyment of worldly greatness; so we should not be pressed to regard the play as a kind of last will and testament, especially as Shakespeare did not break his wand or drown his book: (*Henry VIII* followed, at least largely his, and portions of *Two Noble Kinsmen*). I admit it is possible that he had solved his problems on the plane of ordinary living, that he no longer wanted to write as he had done, and that he was moving into realms where he was finding, as Rimbaud was to find, that *paroles païennes* would not express what now he had to say. However all that may be, I do not believe he was writing a kind of valedictory sermon; but that he was doing what every artist does in every work, exploring reality, here, in some ways, almost directly, and expressing the inapprehensible in symbols which he hoped might bring him illumination.

Nothing more definite? Alas! I hear once more the voice of Aesop, speaking to Homer:

Tous les savants de mon temps . . soutenaient que tous les secrets de la théologie, de la physique, de la morale, et des mathématiques même, étaient renfermés dans ce que vous aviez écrit. Véritablement il y avait quelque difficulté à les développer: où l'un trouvait un sens moral, l'autre en trouvait un physique: mais après cela ils convenaient que vous aviez tout su, et tout dit à qui le comprenait bien.¹

And indeed there have not been lacking' those (*qui le comprenaient bien*) to

¹ VII. 192-219

tell us what *The Tempest* is really about—from those who would have it that Shakespeare was writing so rigid a thing as an allegory, to those whose delicacy of perception delights us, helps our own imagination, leads us to follow threads which promise to lead us excitedly to the centre of the maze. It may be, as Mr. Robert Graves tells us,¹ that

in one aspect *The Tempest* is a play of revenge on [Shakespeare's] personal enemies, that in another it is his farewell to the stage, in another a political satire, in another a religious mystery, in another a spectacle to please the common people, in another a celebration of a royal wedding, in another a piece of rhythmic music—all these are legitimate aspects, but . . .

Indeed yes, but . . . Let us pull ourselves up, even perhaps a little sharply, and desist from pursuing these threads. I do not think that in dissecting a work of art we murder it, but it is possible that we may not be such skilful anatomists as we would like to think. We may, of course, extract such morals as we see fit from any work of art, but I cannot regard *The Tempest* as a sermon, nor believe that Shakespeare was engaged in delivering what M. de Norpois would describe as '*un véritable préchis-prêches*'. And if in the deliciously neat, humorous and perhaps deeply felt epilogue Prospero really is Shakespeare, what was it from which he was praying to be set free? May it not have been from what Lamb called the everlasting coxcombry of our moral pretensions? It is, certainly, always a difficult point to determine how far a great artist is conscious of what he is doing until he has done it; like the rest of us (indeed more so) he must say to himself in the now common phrase which I think M. André Gide invented: "How can I know what I mean till I see what I say?" What, as I believe, the poet does, is, by giving us a thing of delight, to release our spirits into a world of conjecture, freed of any immediate necessity for action. His materials are the thoughts, impulses, velleities which at the moment most occupy him; his symbols are the people he offers to our view, what happens to them, and the music of his utterance. The difference between works of art, in their importance, is the difference in the kind of realm into which we are released, to ponder and to muse, the degree of sensitive awareness induced in us. If we allow 'the meddling intellect', as Wordsworth called it, to meddle too curiously, we prevent the work of art from giving us what it might. We are forcing it, submitting it to our lesser purposes. Surely we should apply Blake's warning:

¹ *Poetic Unreason.*

He who binds to himself a joy
 Does the wingèd life destroy :
 But he who kisses the joy as it flies
 Lives in eternity's sunrise.

So let us be a little delicate with this lovely thing which Shakespeare gave us, a thing composed of the impulses of love and forgiveness, of fear, of the sense of destiny, of the immateriality of our existence, of the brutality of matter ; composed with grace of movement to the sound of entrancing music, a music sometimes terrible, sometimes miraculously sweet, but which brings the whole into a harmony which lies beyond contradiction. The lesson ? Well, perhaps there is a lesson : but art, as De Quincey said,¹ "can teach only as nature teaches, as forests teach, as the sea teaches, as infancy teaches, namely by deep impulse, by hieroglyphic suggestion." Maybe we do it wrong to offer it a show of violence in trying to extract secrets from it, the secrets it might reveal if we fitted it less into our pre-conceptions, and let it quietly do its work upon us. For

. . . Who in his own backyard
 Has not opened his heart to the smiling
 Secret he cannot quote ?
 Which goes to show that the Bard
 Was sober when he wrote
 That this world of fact we love
 Is unsubstantial stuff !
 All the rest is silence
 On the other side of the wall ;
 And the silence ripeness,
 And the ripeness all.²

¹ Speaking of Pope and didacticism.

² W. H. Auden. *The Sea and the Mirror*. Quoted by kind permission of the author and Messrs. Faber and Faber, Ltd.

** This essay was originally delivered as a lecture at the Collège Britannique in Paris.

III

SOME FELLOW-CITIZENS OF SHAKESPEARE IN SOUTHWARK

by KATHARINE ESDAILE

IN the summer of 1567 two young men landed in London. Their names were Gerard Jannsen and Richard Stevens, and they were sculptors by trade; but as they were also Protestants, Holland had become too hot to hold them. There were openings for men of their craft and country, that they knew; had not William Cure of Amsterdam been sent for by the late King to help with the decoration of his Surrey palace of Nonsuch, when England had declared her independence of the Pope, and French and Italian carvers were consequently out of fashion? Cure had started his own yard in Southwark, under the shadow of St. Thomas Apostle, outside the City boundaries, and here he was making a fortune, with an English wife and growing family and with his brother Dericke close by. Here, surely, was ground for hope.

Their work was interesting enough. We know from various sources that they would begin by making the architectural portions of the monuments, ledgers, columns and cornices, then in great demand; then they were promoted to the decorative carvings, pyramids, or little obelisks set upon the cornices, bosses, marble inlays; next came allegorical figures and coats of arms—these last a serious matter, with the College of Arms at Blackfriars keeping a sharp eye on any invasion of their province of correct blazonry. Finally, they were trusted to rough out a bust or effigy to be finished by the master—and people were beginning to be very particular about the likeness, both of feature and of adorning. Now they sat for a model themselves; now they sent a portrait, for heirs were not always to be trusted to carry out their parents' wishes; but a good likeness the sculptor's work had to be. Time went on, and Gerard had obtained his rights of citizenship, changed his name to Johnson, married an Englishwoman, and belonged to the English Church; of their five boys, two, Nicholas and Gerard, were brought up to their father's profession, and in 1593 two apprentices and an assistant formed part of the

family, as the List of Aliens of that year tells us. And they were wanted. Only a year before Gerard had had two colossal commissions, one from the Earl of Rutland, for two monuments for Bottesford representing his father and uncle, one from the executors of Lord Southampton, father of Shakespeare's Earl. The services of Gerard Johnson, tomb-maker, were in great demand. Luckily Nicholas, who was out of his apprenticeship in 1592, could help. He had gone with his father to Bottesford to see to the setting up of the Rutland monuments, and the time had not been devoid of adventure. In the first place, there was the shipping of the precious marbles; Southwark had the advantage of wharves, and either wharves or good roads—a much rarer thing—or both, if possible—were as desirable for a sculptor as plenty of space for his yard; hence the then outskirts of London were the best for the purpose, and Gerard at Southwark had both road and water at his door. They got the Rutland marbles on board; they were unshipped at Boston, whither Gerard and Nicholas rode to meet them; and then they were transferred to ox carts, one of which broke down (without damage to the effigies), and taken to Bottesford. After a pause for beer, the party were billeted in the village, the two Johnsons on the baker, and the local tradesmen tried to overcharge them; but all went well in the end, and the party returned to town, the richer by £200, and the help of a local mason.

The Southampton monument, though only a single work, was yet more exacting, since it had to have three effigies on top and one below. The old Earl ordered the monument in his will; it was to stand in the chancel of Titchfield Church, Hants, "one for my Lorde my Father, and my Ladye my Mother"; "for me with portraites of white alabaster or suche lyke upon the said Monuments"; he left a thousand pounds for the purpose, but Gerard signed a bond for £300 to execute a single work, combining all three effigies upon a single tomb, with the first Earl on a pedestal between his wife and son, and the latter children kneeling upon the base. It is not a little thrilling to look at the eldest son, kneeling in armour below his father, and to realize that here is a portrait of Shakespeare's patron. It is even more thrilling to realize that local tradition states that Shakespeare himself acted at young Lord Southampton's house round about 1593, and there is suggestive evidence that the tradition is true. The singular surname Gobbo is found in the parish registers several times in the 1590's, and we all remember Lancelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice*, a play which dates from that decade. It is tempting, and, in fact, reasonable, to believe that Shakespeare came across the Johnsons in Hampshire and kept in touch with them in Southwark, for it was to the

young Gerard Johnson that his executors applied to execute his monument at Stratford-on-Avon.

Nicholas Johnson was actually a partner with his father in this monument, a notable piece of promotion for so young a man, but it was Gerard only who supplied a Sussex landowner, John Gage of Firle, with drawings for monuments at Firle, on the margins of one of which sculptor and patron carried on an animated correspondence.

What was wanted was a series of full length brasses and alabasters to the Gage family on table tombs in sculptured recesses; Gage complained that the figures were too small; Johnson replied that, if they were made larger, the setting would have to be bigger and would cost more. Gage next said that his wives' dresses were all wrong—they showed their ankles, they were also wearing farthingales—of which he clearly shared the low opinion expressed by Webster's *Bosola*,

“A murrain light on these bawd farthingales”

—and the head-dresses ought to be close French caps: he was sending one in a box for a pattern. Evidently it arrived, for the ladies, as we now see them, wear close-fitting hoods, the fashionable farthingales have gone, and old-fashioned close-fitting dresses have taken their places; and the ankles have vanished under their folds.

Such drawings were usual enough, though clay models were occasionally sent instead.

Gerard's signed drawing for the more interesting tomb with alabaster effigies to Sir John Gage (d. 1557) is also preserved at Firle, a fine work with a Gartered inscription above, but it is on his own tomb that his grandson states that he made these monuments (*fecit haec monumenta*) in 1595.¹

A couple of years later, Johnson got another commission, to commemorate a brother-in-law of Lord Southampton. He varied it by putting his chief subject, Anthony Browne, Viscount Montagu, not lying but kneeling on a pedestal between his wives, but the general likeness to the tomb at Titchfield is very marked. But, whereas that is in the most admirable condition, Lord Montagu's was sadly broken when the monument was moved from Midhurst to Easebourne, and it is at Titchfield, Firle and Bottesford that we get the best idea of Johnson's powers.

He must, it would seem, have retired from business by 1605, but in May, 1611, his old patrons, the Manners family, commissioned Nicholas Johnson to carve the monument of the fifth Earl of Rutland (d. 1612), also

¹ See footnote on p. 31.

at Bottesford, the scene of his earliest artistic adventures outside his father's yard. The Earl died on June 26, 1612, and Gerard had made his will in July, 1611, "being sicke in bodie", giving half his property "to be appraised by fower honest men", to his loving wife, Marie, the other half "to my two sonnes as namelie Nicholas and Garret [Gerard] Johnson to be equallie divided between them": apparently the other boys had died.

Nicholas was now independent, and he produced a monument notable for the appearance of Labour and Rest—figures of boys, one with a spade, one with a torch reversed—upon the cornice, flanking the great coat of arms which was used by his younger brother upon Shakespeare's monument a year or two later. It is from the agreement between Nicholas and the representative of the Manners family indeed that we know the name and nature of these figures, the explanation of which is more interesting to the world than all the noble effigies by the elder brother. Frankly, Gerard Johnson the younger was not a first-rate sculptor, but by a singular chance both the monuments known to be his, thanks to that devoted Warwickshire antiquary, Dugdale, are of Shakespearian interest, and both are at Stratford. One is the effigy of John à Combe, the miserly neighbour on whom Shakespeare wrote a jesting epitaph, the other is that of Shakespeare himself. Of that world-famous work it is enough to say that it has always been appreciated: that casts of it were on sale in the 1730's, when the antiquary Vertue bought one; that Vertue's sketch of it made *before* the restoration of 1745, shows it exactly as it is now; and that Shakespeare's representatives are mainly to blame for what is amiss. They went to the younger (and probably cheaper) brother, and they made him use stone and not alabaster. The result was inevitably an inferior work.

We meet Nicholas again as part author of two important monuments, one that of Bishop Montagu at Bath Abbey, the other that of Thomas Sutton, founder of the Charterhouse, so vividly described in *The Newcomes*. The "similitude or figure representing the Lord Bishop of Winchester" at Bath was to be "well laid in oil colours", so says the agreement of Nov. 24, 1618; and it is in fact one of the loveliest 17th century effigies we possess; the freemason who joined with "Nycholas Johnson carver" in the work was no less a person than his Southwark neighbour, William Cure, grandson of Henry VIII's protégé and, like his father, Cornelius, Master Mason to the Crown: but in the Sutton agreement, which is earlier by three years and in which one of Johnson's subordinates was the great Nicholas Stone, he appears as Citizen and Freemason: both he and his later colleague that is, had taken the Freeman's Oath, which included

the clause "not to connive at the trading of foreigners within the City"; their fathers had settled in Southwark outside the City bounds for that very reason.

After the erection of Shakespeare's monument young Gerard disappears from our ken; after the Montagu monument, the greatest work of art by far in the Abbey Church of Bath, nothing is heard of Nicholas. Their wills have not been traced, and they simply disappear. But the influence of their school went on, and even in far-away Tawstock, their Labour and Rest adorn a monument made by a local hand, a pupil once, perhaps, in the Johnsons' yard, under the shadow of the successor of their church of St. Thomas Apostle, Southwark.

Let us now turn to Richard Stevens—who, as we have been seen, was another of the batch of refugees from the Low Countries who came to London in 1567. He was "borne of Bobnick in Brabant"; and the 1571 "Return of Aliens" shows that he was then settled, as a carver in stone, in the parish of St. George's, Southwark, with his young wife Jane from Ghent. He was five-and-twenty when he came over, his wife two-and-twenty, and they had brought with them a baby son, now five years old. "Came over for religion." What sufferings that official phrase often concealed may be read in the pages of Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*. He had a brother called Meters; Jane died, and he married again, this time an Englishwoman, Margaret, by whom he had children, and though he must have executed many minor works, the first great commission known to us was for a monument to three Earls of Sussex, which still exists, though in no very creditable state, in the Essex church of Boreham. By great good luck, two antiquaries, one of the 17th century, George Weaver, and one of the 18th century, George Vertue, both copied points of interest from the original document dealing with it, from which we learn that it took from 1587-9 to make; that it cost £292. 2s. 8d.; and that it was carried from London to Boreham by road, "in all twelve cart loads". Vertue adds that Sir Christopher Wray, executor of the third Earl thus represented, was responsible for the arrangement, and it is tempting to see in Wray's own monument another work of Stevens, for Wray ordered "a Tombe to be made" for himself "by the discretion of my Exequitors", and a very fine tomb exists at his parish church of Glentworth, Lincolnshire; he died on May 7th, 1592, and Stevens perhaps designed it; but as four months later he also died, he cannot have done the actual carving. He pretty certainly did execute the monument to Frances, Countess of Sussex, widow of the

third Earl, in Westminster Abbey; not only is this inherently probable, but many details resemble the next work, for the authorship of which we have the authority of Stevens himself.

On Sept. 9th, 1592, he made his will; nineteen days later it was proved; his wife and children halved his property; she and his brother Melis were executors; and they were charged with a most unusual duty, best told in the words of the will itself:

“Moreover I Richard Stevens do declare to be my Will that my executors shall neither lay out nor disburse any money for the makeinge up of the Tombe of the Righte honorable Lord my Lord Chancellor of England for that I have already disboursed enough for the same. But yf it please my Lord to finishe the money according to the Contract then I will that according to the same contract y^t shall be made up.”

My Lord Chancellor is neither more nor less than Sir Christopher Hatton, and his monument in Old St. Paul’s was not wholly admired:

“Philip and Francis have no Tomb,
For great Sir Christopher takes all the room,”

lines which, thought Henry Holland, were by “the cheery old man *Stow* himself”, and they expressed a general opinion. The official view is expressed by Camden, who states that Sir Christopher’s nephew “dutifully erected a magnificent monument, becoming the dignity and high character of so great a person”, and no one has hitherto doubted it; we know now that he only finished paying for it, and that it was ordered by the magnificent Chancellor himself, and only finished by his nephew under compulsion.

The Collector is indebted to his son, Mr. Edmund Esdaile, for the following corrections to p. 28:

Haec monumenta at Firle all date from between 1590 and 1595; and thanks to the courtesy of the Viscount Gage and the Rev. F. B. R. Browne I am enabled to elucidate the facts; published accounts hitherto show discrepancies or omissions. Two “table tombs in sculptured recesses,” and the altar tomb to Sir John Gage, K.G. (d. 1556, not 1557, despite the inscription) are documented as by Johnson. A further two brasses, not documented, complete the series, and are presumably also by Johnson. The Firle muniments are deposited with the Sussex Archaeological Society. One further *addendum*: the Montagu monument at Easebourne is attributable to Gerard Johnson on several grounds; but I have not found documentary proof.

IV

BEN JONSON'S *DISCOVERIES*: A NEW ANALYSIS

by RALPH S. WALKER

MOST readers of Ben Jonson's *Discoveries* must have found it a somewhat bewildering scrapbook, uneven in quality and apparently wanting in plan, though none can have failed to be impressed by its fitful power and fascination. In parts the paragraphs are linked, for a time, by continuity of sense or similarity of subject-matter: in parts, again, there seems no coherence between them. In his introduction to the edition published in 1906, Professor Castelain called attention to the evidence of a hasty, uncomprehending attempt by some hand, perhaps the first editor's, but obviously not the writer's, to group and arrange the assortment of translations, notes, and extracts of which the book is composed. There is plenty of indication that these papers, collected after his death from Jonson's "remains", and assembled under the alternative titles of *Timber*, *Explorata*, or *Discoveries*, fell at some time into disorder, and it would be easy to give more instances of the glaring misplacement of passages than those mentioned by Castelain or by the most recent co-editors. Professor Herford and Mr. and Mrs. Simpson, being concerned with facts rather than theories, are not prepared to accept Castelain's conclusions about the part played by the editor of the 1640-41 folio in adding to the confusion of the printer's copy, yet an examination of the order and contents of the whole collection has led me to certain opinions about its nature and significance which accord well with most of Castelain's conjectures.

What I think may have happened is that when the so-called Second Folio of 1640-41 was in process of editing, certain sheaves of papers, intended by Jonson for a variety of different purposes, but perhaps in few cases for publication exactly as they stood, were collected together and found to be in disorder, or were allowed to fall into disorder in the course of searching through them. The editor, Sir Kenelm Digby, then extracted from among them the fragmentary *Sad Shepherd* and the disorderly *Discoveries*, and decided, after the rest of the contents had gone to press, to add them to Volume II; for, as Castelain points out, these items appear to have been printed separately, and are the only ones in the

volume which bear the date 1641. He, or the printer, next, perhaps, made some attempt to reduce the jumbled *Discoveries* to a rough order, and, since Jonson had the habit of putting marginal notes and references in Latin to some of his paragraphs, added others where these were lacking, in order to give an air of uniformity to the whole collection. In doing this, as in arranging the order, he did not always pause even to read the passages concerned, and so provided us with the inappropriate headings, of which an example is *Morbi*, for a note¹ whose first line makes figurative mention of diseases, but which is really concerned with the retention of minor errors in ecclesiastical dogma; as also, perhaps, those which merely Latinize the first word or phrase of the passage. The whole thing was then printed off, and added to the already prepared third, or critical, section of the volume, to follow *Horace his Art of Poetrie* and the *English Grammar*; just as the *Sad Shepherd* appears to have been added to the fourth, or dramatic, section, after *The Magnetic Lady* and the *Tale of a Tub*.

Whether this was precisely what happened or not, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that *Discoveries* was too-hurriedly thrown together and rushed to press. Indeed the whole "Second Folio" is an example of imperfect editing, and Gifford comments, in his note on the *Underwoods*, on its editor's "rude attempts" to arrange his matter, and the "marks of carelessness and ignorance" visible in every page. The confusion of the *Discoveries* has been aggravated by subsequent editors, with their different opinions as to paragraphing, and the somewhat misleading system of numbering introduced by Sir Israel Gollancz. But the materials composing it appear to me to be classifiable in five groups, and I have found it helpful, in studying the book, to keep these groups in mind. First, there is a miscellaneous assortment of scraps of moral wisdom; second, a few notes of a kind which might be made by a writer of comedies with future plays in mind; third, some longer passages on moral topics which appear to me to be essays, or, portions of essays; fourth, the fragments of a treatise, probably incomplete, on statecraft or good government; and fifth, parts of a work on the writing and appreciation of good literature, intended, it would seem, for the instruction of the young.

To the first group I assign forty-four of Sir Israel Gollancz's paragraphs,² together, more doubtfully, with the one on the Puritan Hypocrite,³ which Jonson discreetly phrased in Latin instead of English.

¹ 1058-1062. The line references are to Herford and Simpson's edition, 1947.

² 1-59; 175-178; 236-241; 251-257; 405-569; 801-820; 959-966; 1046-1115; 1298-1305; and 1468-1508.

³ 60-64.

These are all short, sententious passages, mostly translated from Latin authors, suitable for rendering into epigrammatic verse or dramatic blank verse according to the plan we know Jonson often followed: many examples can be found in his plays and poems of versification from Latin originals, and he told Drummond plainly that he wrote his verses first in prose. But they may have been assembled for some other purpose than to provide raw materials for creative writing. They may have been experimental exercises in translation, for their styles vary, and they vary in their closeness to their sources. Some are free, imaginative renderings of their originals, like the translation of Quintilian's "Quantulum enim studiis impartimur: Alias horas vanus salutandi labor, alias datum fabulis otium, alias spectacula, alias convivia trahunt"¹ as "What a deale of cold busines doth a man mis-spend the better part of life in ! in scattering complements, tendring visits, gathering and venting newes, following Feasts and Playes, making a little winter-love in a darke corner."² Others though suggested by a Latin text, are warm with personal feeling; like the passage on Flattery,³ which was written with the preface to Book VI of Seneca's *Naturales Quæstiones* in mind. Others, again, though fairly close to their sources, are handled so vividly that they seem direct expressions of personal experience; like the passage on Memory,⁴ which it is hard to realize comes almost entirely from Book I of the *Controversie* of the elder Seneca.

Again, they may have been intended, as has been suggested, merely to fix in the memory, or preserve for reference, notable formulations of the moral sentiments Jonson found peculiarly appealing; but in view of the care, skill, and imaginative energy expended on them, this seems to me unlikely. Certainly they were chosen for their sense, and not for any particular verbal problems to be solved in translation, but though they are brief they are works of conscious art: indeed, the prose in which they are composed is unsurpassed in force and variety by any Jacobean writer. I think it very likely that in this group we have the nucleus of a collection of *Apophthegmata*, which Jonson, following the example of Erasmus, was gradually assembling for publication, and to which he intended to apply the characteristically Jonsonian title of *Explorata or Discoveries* subsequently used by the editor of the folio for the whole collection of papers printed as one work at the end of the third section of Volume II. Apart

¹ *De Institutione Oratoria.* XII: XI: 18.

² 56-59.

³ 1070-1092.

⁴ 479-507.

from the influence of the Latin originals, making for dignity and concision, the main influence on their style appears to me to be that of Bacon; and in the composition of these short moral *sententiae* it is naturally the influence of his essay-style, rather than of his more flowing treatise-style which predominates: but in these, as in other passages which I shall mention later, Jonson, with his long experience as a writer of dramatic dialogue, shows himself more versatile in the management of prose than his model.

The second group into which the *Discoveries* may be divided is a small one, consisting of thirteen short jottings of a different kind,¹ surely never intended to appear in company with the first group, or indeed, as they stand, to be published at all. They may have been noted down because of some suggestions they contained which might be of use to a working dramatist always on the look-out for eccentricities of human conduct to portray in comedy, or for a telling, or laughable phrase to leaven his comic dialogue with. Some make little sense: "Of this *Spilt water*, there is little to bee gathered up: it is a desperate debt"; "You admire no *Poems*, but such as run like a Brewers cart upon the stones, hobling"—such scraps are not "publishable matter", yet they may have commended themselves to Jonson because their phrasing suggested figures of speech he might at some time make use of himself. The reprobate husband who preferred drinking and dubious acquaintances to the company of his wife and family; the thief "with a great belly", who longed at the gallows' foot to commit one more robbery: the German Count, who went to trial, torture and execution always insisting on the ceremony due to his rank; and the "tedious person", with his brainless irrelevant conversation; might all, conceivably, take shape as characters in a comedy, but they are quite out of place in a prose anthology, in the disjointed, scarcely grammatical, form in which they are presented. The sentences of exceedingly trite wisdom, cast in proverbial form, like "*Affliction* teacheth a wicked person sometimes to pray: *Prosperity* never": and "A woman, the more curious she is about her face, is commonly the more carlesse about her house", seem to me equally valueless, except as material for dramatic dialogue, where they might be effectively introduced in suitable situations: and a sentence purporting to explain why the natural instinct of love is stronger than that of hunger,² which occurs, in the folio, in the middle of a serious paragraph on the reverence

¹ 179-218; 322-329; 967-971; and 2816-2820.

² 967-971.

due to princes, is of the same sort. The nonsensical story, headed "*Heare-say Newes*", about the elephant-ambassador of the Grand Mogul¹ (which I take to be a popular tale invented to explain the significance of the Elephant-and-Castle emblem of the Cutlers' Company, a familiar sight to seventeenth-century Londoners), if it was not copied down from some mere whim, must also, surely, have been intended for incorporation in comic dialogue.

My third group consists of five, or perhaps six, passages, longer than those of the first and second groups, and showing development of thought and some sign of shaping from an opening to a conclusion. These appear to be essays, composed partly after the manner of Bacon and partly after that of Montaigne. The first, on *Envy*,² opens in the Baconian way: "*Envy* is no new thing, nor was it borne onely in our times. The Ages past have brought it forth, and the coming Ages will. So long as there are men fit for it, *quorum odium virtute relictâ placet*, it will never be wanting"; but it develops in the more intimate manner of Montaigne, and the style rapidly acquires that warmth of personal feeling which so often distinguishes Jonson's prose from Bacon's. There is no mistaking for Bacon's such a passage as the indignant one which recalls Jonson's taunting Epigram X, "*To my Lord Ignorant*": "Hee is upbraydingly call'd a *Poet*, as if it were a most contemptible *Nickname*. But the *Professors* (indeed) have made the learning cheape. Rayling, and tinckling Rimeres, whose Writings the vulgar more greedily reade; as being taken with the scurrility, and petulancie of such wits. Hee shall not have a Reader now, unlesse hee jeere and lye. It is the food of men's natures: the diet of the times!" or the passionate outburst later on: "But it is the disease of the Age: and no wonder if the world, growing old, begin to be infirme: Ole Age it selfe is a disease. It is long since the sick world began to doate, and talke idly: Woulde she had but doated still; but her dotage is now broke forth into a madnesse, and become a meere phrensy."

The essay on *Talking Too Much*,³ though derived from a passage in the *Noctes Atticæ* of Aulus Gellius, is like the last, complete in itself, and might almost pass for an essay by Bacon, but for the last three sentences, which have that lively colloquial quality often present in Jonson's comic dialogue but entirely foreign to the prose of Bacon: ". . . one, when hee had got the inheritance of an unlucky old *Grange*, would needs sell it; and to draw buyers, proclaim'd the vertues of it. *Nothing* ever thriv'd on

¹ 322-329.

² 258-321.

³ 330-404.

it (saith he). *No owner of it, ever dyed in his bed; some hung, some drown'd themselves; some were banish't, some starv'd; the trees were all blasted; the Swyne dyed of Measils, the Cattell of the Murren, the Sheepe of the Rot; they that stood were ragg'd, bare, and bald as your hand; nothing was ever rear'd there; not a Duckling, or a Goose. Hospitium fuerat calamitatis.* Was not this man like to sell it?"

The passage headed "*Ingeniorum discrimina*"¹ may have been intended for incorporation in the larger discussion of literary styles of which fragments are scattered through the book; but it may equally well have been intended for shaping into an essay of Baconian form. There can be no doubt as to the prevailing stylistic influence on such sentences as these: "There is no doctrine will doe good, where nature is wanting. Some wits are swelling, and high; others low and still: Some hot and fiery; others cold and dull: One must have a bridle, the other a spurre"; and "You have others that labour onely to ostentation; and are ever more busy about the colours, and surface of a worke, then in the matter, and foundation: For that is hid, the other scene." This essay, as it stands, is largely compounded of scraps translated from Seneca and Quintilian, and what Jonson says in it of essayists, "even their Master *Montaigne*," who, in all they write, confesse still what bookes they have read last; and therein their owne folly, so much, that they bring it to the *Stake* raw, and un-digested", might seem, in view of his own practice, to indicate an abnormal lack of self-criticism in him, if it were not that the emphasis of the passage is on the indiscriminate nature of the borrowing which leads writers into inconsistencies and self-contradiction, whereas Jonson's own borrowings are made with almost unvarying consistency, to illustrate and confirm certain leading principles which he held clearly in mind. Jonson's borrowings are "digested", in the sense that they have been made part of himself, incorporated in his system of thought and belief, before they are produced in translation. We can seldom be quite sure that they are not unconscious recollections from past reading, rather than translations from an open book: for in his *Conversations with Drummond* there are at least four instances of his facility in applying, for his own original purposes, almost the exact words of Latin critics—in references to Drayton, Du Bartas, Lucan, and Beaumont—all made in the course of random fireside talk, and showing to what a remarkable degree, as Mr. Patterson says, "he carried the classics in solution in his brain."²

¹ 669–800.

² *Conversations with Drummond*, ed. R. F. Patterson, 1924. Introduction, p. xxxv.

The passage rather vaguely headed “*De bonis et malis*”¹ and divided up by five more, equally clumsy, Latin titles in the margin, lacks the initial pounce on the main topic of a typical essay by Bacon, but it develops into a discussion of Worthless Aims which is full both of Baconian reflection and Jonsonian warmth of feeling, and concludes at a high pitch of moral fervour with the clinching aphorism: “Hee that would have his vertue published, is not the servant of vertue, but glory.” If these paragraphs, from the *Apologia* of Apuleius and the *Epistolæ* of Seneca, do represent an experiment by Jonson in the art of essay-writing, the free, rambling, personal style adopted shows that the model here was not Bacon, except in details, but Montaigne, the “master”. The fact that the Latin sources are very closely followed at many points does not lessen the likelihood that the passage was intended for an essay; for, as we have seen, Jonson considered copious borrowing to be a usual process in the compiling of essays, and condemned only those who did not genuinely share the sentiments expressed in their sources.

A passage on the connection between Poetry and Painting² which occurs later on in the book and is translated largely from Plutarch and Quintilian, begins as if intended to develop into an essay. If so, it must surely have been left uncompleted, for instead of working to an orthodox essay-conclusion, it deteriorates into a summary catalogue of facts. It is equally possible that it was intended for inclusion in some extension of the treatise on Poetry which occupies so much of the second half of the *Discoveries*, and to which several fragments in the first half may belong. As it stands in the folio, it is interrupted midway by an irrelevant paragraph³ which appears to have been inserted on the hasty decision of a casual editor who mistook its first words: “*In Picture*, light is requir'd no lesse then shadow . . .” to indicate that its contents, like those of the paragraphs before and after, were concerned with the art of painting. The passage which immediately follows that on painting seems to me, on the other hand, to form a complete and shapely little essay on Flatterers,⁴ peculiarly interesting because it is so free of the Baconian influence, so comparatively fresh and frank in style, so warm and urgent in its feeling—qualities which may be demonstrated in its final sentences: “Neither will an honourable person inquire, who eats, and drinks together, what that man playes, whom this man loves; with whom such a one walkes; what

¹ 1323–1467.

² 1509–1540 and 1549–1585.

³ 1541–1548.

⁴ 1586–1635.

discourse they held; who sleepes, with whom. They are base, and servile natures, that busie themselves about these disquisitions. How often have I seene, (and worthily) these Censors of the family, undertaken by some honest *Rustick*, and cudgel'd thriftily? These are commonly the off-scworing and dregs of men, that doe these things, or calumniate others: Yet I know not truly which is worse; hee that malignes all, or that praises all. There is as great a vice in praising, and as frequent, as in detracting."

The paragraphs in my fourth group appear to belong to a work, roughed out rather than finished off, on the subject of Statecraft. There were plenty of forerunners in this favourite Elizabethan field, and it is difficult to decide from the nature of the fragments in the *Discoveries*, whether Jonson contemplated writing a protracted thesis on the subject, or whether he planned it merely as an anti-Machiavellian tract, or "epistle", expressed on the face of it in terms of state policy, but to be understood more broadly as concerning every man in the conduct of his own affairs. It can hardly be doubted that the fragments belong together, and were collected with one end in view, the style is so consistent, the presence of a theme so obvious, yet they are widely dispersed through the book, and even where they come together in series they are sometimes out of their logical order, as if a hasty attempt had been made to group them, but none to rearrange them in their original sequence. Yet I think the scattered paragraphs can be assembled in an order which suggests consecutive development of thought: and the gist of the fragmentary treatise, as we have it in the folio, though shorn of its many effective illustrations, and robbed of the forcefulness inherent in its style, may perhaps be expressed as follows:

A Prince should be a wise man, because his decisions affect the welfare of others as well as of himself: he must be prudent, looking to the past and to the future when deciding present courses.¹ An illiterate ruler is handicapped because he lacks the disinterested counsel which books can give; and even though he may be naturally inclined to virtue, he needs such guides. The whole temper of the age depends largely on the counsel followed by the ruler.² Princes vary in wisdom, and the quality of their ministers varies: the character of an age depends on whether good or bad men are in authority.³ Good men should be promoted in the state, because they do credit to

¹ 1003-1019.

² 1234-1249.

³ 242-250.

their times, and when set in positions of prominence, serve for example and incentive to others.¹ Learned men are also necessary to a ruler, and he should seek their advice and reward them suitably from his bounty.

Ideally a prince's counsellor should be learned in all the branches of knowledge, but especially he should understand human nature. So that his authority may carry weight, he should have the reputation of being an honest and wise man; and to acquire such a reputation he must lead a good life, and be modest and prudent, considerate of others, respectful towards his prince.² The truly disinterested among the nobles make the best officers of state, but the others are not all useless: those who are merely passive in their selfishness may be of service to their ruler on occasion. It is the men who actively pursue their own interests, putting them before those of their prince, who must be treated by him as his enemies.³ Such officials are the chief despoilers of the state, for they exercise authority for their own gain at the expense of the innocent and the powerless. A wise master will keep them in check and punish them as they deserve.⁴

The common people are cantankerous and critical, and always hard to govern. Their opinions on their ruler's conduct of affairs are variable and ill-founded, and should not be allowed to sway him from a right course. Instead of presuming to censure their prince, they ought rather to love him next to God, and reverence in him the embodiment of duty to the public weal. He, in his turn, should judge them as mercifully as he would judge himself, tempering his administration of the law with pity.⁵

A ruler elected by his peers is in a more uneasy position than one chosen by the people, for he is likely to suffer from the murmuring and the intriguing of those who appointed him to further their own ends. A popular sovereign, provided he honestly seeks to further the welfare of the people, can count on their support, against his nobles. Machiavelli advised princes to preserve their subjects' favour by performing all their cruelties through deputies. But, on the contrary, cruelty should never be practised. Clemency in government is far more effective than severity. Machiavelli says that cruelty, when resorted to, should be thorough-going, or it will fail to achieve its end. But this is bad counsel, for cruelty leads only to more cruelty; and to hatred, unrest, and insecurity. Government is strongest when founded in religion and morality. Princes must answer to God for

¹ 1291-1297.

² 65-115.

³ 1127-1138.

⁴ 1306-1322.

⁵ 972-1002.

their conduct as rulers.¹ Caligula longed for fame at any price; and said at one time that he wished to cut off the heads of all the people of Rome at one stroke. Such an irresponsible and unfeeling ruler is in danger from the resentment of the people.²

A ruler who does not recognize God's sovereignty over him is a tyrant. He will try above all things to enlarge his empire, and will not hesitate to sacrifice the lives of whole nations in the process. But such evil governors are in danger from the very men they tend to promote, and their rule leads to its own ruin. "A *good king* is a publike Servant."³ If men realized what heavy duties and responsibilities pertained to kingship, there would be little competition for thrones and sceptres. The prince is "the *soule* of the Commonwealth; and ought to cherish it, as his owne body"; he should not regard it as a property to be exploited to his own advantage. He should not pursue the aggrandizement that can be obtained only through slaughter, but should follow a peaceful policy in peace, and a warlike one if war is forced on him. He should be faithful to his word, even when given to an enemy; careful of his subjects' good; slow to punish, but swift to deal with proved offences; maintaining and respecting the law. He should not sell honours, but should bestow them only on good advice and as a reward for good services. If he finds he has been deceived into making an unfair award, he should acknowledge his mistake, and correct it. For a prince must answer to God not only for himself, but for those he has raised to authority under him."⁴

This arrangement of the extracts, though certainly not the only possible one, should serve to show that they were not random and haphazard jottings, but were collected with a plan in mind. It may be that the whole matter of the treatise is here, ready for assembly, and that all that was needed was a linking phrase or two between some of the passages to complete it, before the pages fell into disorder and left the first editor a task of rearrangement, which, for some reason, he was unable or unwilling to carry out with any thoroughness. There is here further evidence of Jonson's versatility, and of his habit of experimenting in new literary forms; he was venturing, I suggest, into the field of Sir Thomas Elyot's translations, and had in mind such works as *The Doctrine of Princes* and *The Image of Governance*: but his own treatise, based in part on careful selections from the writings of Vives, Seneca, and Justus Lipsius, would have stressed those qualities in human nature in which he himself most firmly believed, and would have displayed, as

¹ 1139-1212.

² 1116-1126.

³ 1213-1233.

⁴ 1250-1291.

anyone must agree who reads the relevant passages in the *Discoveries* consecutively instead of in dispersion as they stand, his own characteristic fervour and pungency.

The fifth, and final, group of passages is divisible, if we include the paragraphs of painting already mentioned, into five sections. I group these together because they are closely related in subject-matter, and I think they may have been intended for incorporation, with some alterations and additions, in a single work. There is the opening of a letter to a patron who has asked for advice and help in the education of his sons;¹ a short passage of clear and concise instruction on how to write letters, which is complete in itself;² the note on the relationship of painting to poetry, which concludes with a very scanty summary of the history of painting;³ a short *De Poetica* culled mainly from Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Quintilian, Horace, and Daniel Heinsius, which is in the form of a framework rather than of a finished treatise;⁴ and a longer series of notes, written in a fully-wrought, imaginative allusive style, on the related subjects of how to write well and how to judge the merits of good writing, which, though scattered through the book, can be assembled in such a way as to reveal continuity of thought and purpose. The sections have this in common, that all are concerned with teaching about literature and the arts, either theoretically or by more practical instruction. The notes in the *De Poetica* are in many points redundant to the fuller notes in the longer series, which may indicate that they were intended for some separate publication, or that they were drawn up as a systematic framework into which the notes of the longer series might be fitted.

I suggest that in this group of passages we have an unfinished work intended, like so many other educational writings of the period after the Renaissance, as a text-book for teachers of the young. The introduction would, no doubt, have taken the form of a letter to "My Lord" on the general principles to be observed in the education of children: and on this Jonson has nothing to say that is not thoroughly sound. Ascham, it is true, had said it all before; but Jonson takes from Ascham nothing that is not permanently true and that would not be endorsed by the most enlightened of modern educational theorists. Thereafter the treatise would have been concerned mainly with how and what to read in order to form

¹ 1636-1696 and 1787-1880.

² 2161-2289.

³ 1509-1540 and 1549-1585.

⁴ 2346-2815. See the Additional Note on p. 51, *infra*.

literary taste ; some instruction on how to write well and avoid the stylistic vices common in contemporary authors ; and a statement of the principles on which critical judgments of the arts ought to be based.

To show that these extracts, so widely dispersed through the *Discoveries*, may have been written out with some such plan in mind, I have put them in one of several possible sequences, and made a précis to indicate the train of thought which may be traced through the series. The opening paragraphs summarise the matter contained in the "letter to my Lord" ;

You asked me for advice about the education of your sons : especially as to their studies. What I have to offer may seem trivial, but education must begin with elementary matters. You should study the aptitudes of young children and, by degrees and by providing them with variety of occupation, lead them to attempt things to which they are not at first inclined. Teaching should, at first, be disguised as a sort of game, and children should be drawn to learning by its attractiveness and by their natural desire to emulate each other, not driven to it. Later they should be sent to school, not kept at home ; for at school they will learn to adjust themselves to the society of others, and they will find there a stimulating competition lacking at home. Love of play is a sign of high spirits and, within limits, should be encouraged. Corporal punishment should never be used : even the threat of it is harmful and degrading.¹ The study of books should be begun early, while children are at their most receptive ; but the books chosen should be graduated to suit their capacities. The simpler and more easily understood of those which ennable the mind should be read first, and those which require discrimination to appreciate, as to style or matter, should be left until later, when their faults can be perceived and discounted.

Many people have more capacity for learning than they realize, but are content, from laziness, to assume that their powers of understanding are inferior. Children will often show more patience than adults in tackling a difficult task, because they are more easily satisfied with the result. Laziness must not be allowed to check studies, and though it is necessary to work hard, the work need not be unpleasant : many things may be learnt at one time, for in most activities different skills are simultaneously involved ; and change of work can be as refreshing as a rest.

In studying, it is not the acquiring of knowledge that is tiresome, but the becoming entangled, in the process, in a mass of detail. It is stultifying to pay too much attention to the scruples of grammarians, though such things have their value. More important in learning to write well are observation and experience, and the chief thing to aim at

¹ 1636-1696.

is clarity, by the use of plain, customary language. It is impossible for any writer to be expert in all knowledge; he must know something about the subjects he handles, but to try to say everything about anything would be to write without end.¹

Recreation can help one to work better, but it can be a hindrance and should be regulated. Yet I knew an excellent writer who was quite immoderate both in resting and working, for he overdid both alternately. But he was a man of supreme talent both in writing and speaking, with a subtlety which never unduly displayed itself, and an unforced, colloquial style in which the illustrations were never mere ornaments.²

To get down to more practical instruction about writing: negligent and disorderly speech is discreditable in a man; even more so bad writing, for it cannot be excused as extempore.³ Writing must not be dull or empty; nor should it be intricate and ornate. Excess, however, is better than deficiency in a young writer, for it can usually be rectified, whereas the other may indicate incapacity. Much is to be excused, and even praised, in a beginner, which would not be creditable in a mature writer.⁴ To write well you must read the best authors and hear the best speakers, and you must practise diligently. Consider first what is to be said, and only after that how it is to be said. Your choice of the form and order of your composition, and of the words you use, must be careful, however laboured the result may at first appear. Aim at accuracy, and reject your first thoughts in favour of your considered revision. Rewrite often: it revives the imagination and enables you to improve your composition in various ways. Facility will come gradually.⁵ Even Shakespeare, with all his gifts, would have been better at times to have revised his work.⁶

In imitating the best authors, you should not form yourself on any one in particular, for no imitator can hope to equal his model. I can think of only one who might stand by himself as the perfect example, and that is Bacon, who exemplified in his style, both as a speaker and a writer, all the chief virtues to be aimed at. His language was consistently weighty, well-considered, shapely, concise, pointed, and without padding of any kind. He could sway the mind and delight it at the same time. Imperial Rome is said to have had only one writer fully worthy of her greatness, in Cicero. We in England have had many good writers during the past century, and the succession culminated in Bacon, who was equal or superior to any of the Greeks and Romans. He was great because of his work for learning, not because

¹ 1787-1880.

² 821-845.

³ 2125-2160.

⁴ 1772-1787.

⁵ 1697-1754.

⁶ 647-668.

of his position or rank. In his time there was a great flourishing of genius in England, but there has since been a decline.¹ Yet, though manners, scholarship and letters are alike in a state of decadence to-day, they may revive; for human nature remains potentially capable of doing in the future things as great as any done in the past.²

In style there should be not only pith, but elegance as well; we should aim at something better than the rough and formless art of barbarous times.³ Language is the mark of man's superiority over the beasts, and the chief instrument of his social intercourse. It is made up of words and meaning; for words are dead things without the sense in them, which is the product of experience of life. There is a decorum to be observed in the choice of words: they should be suited in every way to the subject in hand, just as a dramatist fits the dialogue to the characters he creates. So, too, metaphors and illustrations should be in every way fitting. Coining new words is dangerous, but at times we may be compelled to it by sheer necessity. What determines the best language for a writer is the custom of the age among educated speakers and writers, and he should conform to it in the main, for the chief virtue of style is perspicuity. For this reason archaic terms should be very sparingly used, though they have their uses. The most recent of archaic terms and the longest established of current terms are the best. But in all things suitability and need must decide.

There are various styles, such as the succinct, the brief, the concise, and the abrupt. In all, orderliness should be aimed at, for such confusion as may be introduced by the mixing of metaphors and the over-elaborating of allegories is a hindrance to understanding.⁴ The bent of a man's mind determines the nature of his language, just as in society at large we see the tendencies of the time reflected in contemporary speech. The corrupt and irresponsible behaviour so general today is paralleled by the wantonness of fashionable language.⁵ A man's character is clearly revealed by his choice of words, and literary styles vary just as men's natures do. To use a physical analogy, as men are tall or short, so styles may be stilted or stunted, but the best are in between, neither excessive nor defective in any way.⁶ Style should not, however, be unvarying; for the elevated and the plain have their different uses. Simplicity may be pursued to the point of puerility, and the attempt to maintain a consistent elevation of style may become a vice.⁷ It is better to be natural than to try to keep

¹ 884-947.

² 124-128.

³ 116-123.

⁴ 1881-2030.

⁵ 948-958.

⁶ 2031-2089.

⁷ 1541-1548.

up an artificial brilliance throughout. That sort of thing has produced the preposterous, affected literary styles fashionable today, which are as absurd as the effeminate clothes our young men wear.¹

Men who excel in particular fields are seldom equally felicitous outside them. Even within one field, men differ in the particular excellences they display; as, for instance, in oratory, where one speaker may be good at opening an argument, but not at pursuing it, while another may be good at reasoning his case, but not at setting out the facts. Good extempore speakers sometimes fail to impress with set, prepared speeches; whereas others, when surprised into extempore speaking, have surpassed all their previous, carefully prepared attempts. Nevertheless no orator should neglect study and diligence, for they are always an enrichment of the mind and a means to improvement.²

But to turn from oratory to poetry: Poetry is the most exalted form of eloquence, yet it has fallen into disrepute in our time because it is looked upon as a vehicle for calumny. The credit of all poets has been lowered in consequence; yet they do well to castigate folly and vice, so long as they avoid personalities. Those who wear the cap because it fits should have the discredit, not the poets, whose function it is to speak the truth, even if it gives offence.³ Forming light and hasty judgements about literature is characteristic of this age. Bad writers have profited from it, and good writers have suffered; for silly things will always have admirers, and the more superficial, the more popular. A true poet has little to encourage him today, when the mass of the people are so easily captivated by mere show and bravado: and this is true not only of the illiterate but also of our fashionable young men.⁴ Some people enjoy in poetry only what seems objectionable or obscene, and seek it out for comment, so bringing all poets into disrepute. But those who despise poets do so usually because they think in terms of wordly gain, forgetting that a man may choose to spend himself for the benefit of others. And when poets are really concerned about truth and goodness, and are not mere versifiers, they are worth as much as philosophers, divines and statesmen combined.⁵

The fine arts are more highly to be esteemed than the useful ones, because they minister to the mind rather than to the body. They are the work of exceptional men: anyone may practise the others. And to set up as a critic of the fine arts is not for everybody; for to be praised in the wrong place, and by the wrong person, is shameful to a true genius.⁶ Critics who dispute over superficialities are ridiculous. There are too many of these today, for whereas in former times

¹ 570-586.

² 846-883.

³ 2290-2345.

⁴ 587-646.

⁵ 1020-1045.

⁶ 160-174.

learned men were genuinely concerned with knowledge and truth, there are now a host of charlatans and smatterers who make their voices heard above those of their betters.¹

We should learn from the example of the great writers of antiquity, but it is a mistake to think them infallible. Our own experience should enable us to get beyond dependence on them and should help us to improve on them. There is nothing blameworthy or ungrateful in this. It is not ingratitude that makes me differ from the classical writers I have learnt most from. I am grateful for their help, but I believe they would approve of my independence. I do not presume to claim equality with them, but I want to be judged without prejudice, by the same standards of truth.² It was well said by Bacon that the worst forms of discussion are, first, those which are a matter of mere verbal intricacy; second, those which are mere empty theorizing; and, third, those which rely for confirmation on the citing of impressive authorities and so can easily impose false teaching on the credulous. No scholar or writer should be accepted as infallible in the way the schoolmen accepted Aristotle. We should use our own judgements and get beyond the teaching and practice of the Ancients, testing all we read carefully, dispassionately, and impartially.³

I take all this trouble to teach others so that they may become independent of my teaching: my aim is to encourage experiment and development along right lines. Not much that is new can be said about the art of writing, but it may be found helpful to have a selection offered for judgement from among the various, sometimes contradictory, opinions of past writers on the subject. No theories or instructions are of any value unless they stimulate original thought: I write for those only who have the will and capacity to think for themselves.⁴

In summarizing Jonson's rich, and often impassioned Jacobean prose in a vocabulary more characteristic of the present day, I may have distorted, or even misinterpreted his meaning at points, and I have omitted much that is essential to a full understanding of the *Discoveries*, for my purpose has been merely to show that the critical fragments dispersed through the book may be assembled in an order which suggests a planned development of thought, and that they amount, when considered together, to a consistent presentation of a firmly held critical position. Whether the intention was to combine them into a treatise, or whether they did at one time form a treatise which fell to pieces before it reached the printer, are

¹ 219-236.

² 129-159.

³ 2090-2124.

⁴ 1755-1772.

not matters of so much moment as the fact that they express plainly and without wavering the central corpus of critical belief from which Ben Jonson's thoughts and works alike proceeded.

He shows himself in this work to be at once the most traditional and the most original critic of his age. He cannot be described as a "neo-classic" critic, unless the term is defined afresh to include his special case, for it is essential to observe that while he has absorbed into the very tissue of his mind much of the best classical teaching about art, he is just as deeply imbued with the spirit of Bacon's *Novum Organum*. Like Bacon's his is a call to the study and imitation of Nature; to experiment and initiative; to emancipation from servile submission to authority; to the use of reason founded on experience for the solution of all problems; to the weighing of facts against theories; to the recognition that learning and art can contribute to the betterment of men's conditions of life. He agrees with Sidney about the high calling of the poet; with Ascham about the value of imitating the best authors; with Harvey about the undesirability of eccentricities in style; with Puttenham about the importance of correction and revision; with Webbe about the causes of the prevalent abuses of language: indeed, it is doubtful if he makes a single point which had not already been made by some of his English predecessors. But he differs in that clear-sighted penetration to essentials which saves him from becoming entangled, as they were so prone to be, in superficial matters of decorum, prosody and diction, and in the integrity which preserves him from academic toying with ideas in the course of a discussion about matters which he felt to be of vital importance. He sees himself as a pioneer, not as a schoolman; and his face is turned, not in humble adoration towards the past, but in energetic optimism towards the future, in spite of those contemporary defections of which he is so sharply aware and which he makes it his business to castigate at every opportunity: "I cannot thinke *Nature* is so spent, and decay'd, that she can bring forth nothing worth her former yeares. She is alwayes the same, like her selfe: And when she collects her strength, is abler still. Men are decay'd, and *studies*: Shee is not." He is an explorer and discoverer, whose belief is in the virtues of personal experience and practical experiment; and the literary works of the past appeal to him, not as matter for uncritical acceptance and imitation, but as part of that "*Nature*" which must submit to the scrutiny of the scientific thinker if advances are to be made in knowledge and techniques.

He is classical in the best sense, in that his standards are those of the central current of the humane tradition, continuous though frequently

submerged; and have their sanction not merely in the theories of certain classical writers and the practices of others, but in permanent values which are simultaneously moral and aesthetic. His emphasis on such things as "body" in writing, perspicuity, conscious effort and diligent practice, the mean as nearer the truth than the extremes, the desirability of beauty in the surface texture as well as, more profoundly, in the inner meaning of art, is the product of this "central" critical sanity. He has distilled out of the complex mixture of doctrines preached between Plato's time and his own, a simple code, whose key-word is "integrity".

He has, of course, certain limitations, which are inherent in the philosophical vocabulary of his day. We are aware in his thought of that dichotomy of form and subject-matter which was scarcely to be resolved before Coleridge's time; and of the familiar clumsy suggestion that the value of poetry may be judged by its overt moral meaning—a confusion of thought into which Plato betrayed many centuries of critics. But such defects in the instruments available to him are largely surmounted; for in the broad context of his work the blemishes and inconsistencies due to contemporary limitations of thought are absorbed and to a great extent adjusted.

In the *Discoveries* we have the key to his own aims as pursued along many different paths, as well as to that unrecorded body of teaching which so profoundly impressed his disciples and was imparted largely orally in one tavern supper-room or another. He was a conscious artist, not merely in the "bricklayer" sense, but in the sense that his art was consciously directed towards the fulfilment of certain firmly held beliefs and ideals. He was not equally successful in all the lines of experiment he adopted; but in all alike he was driven by the need, not only to express his critical ideas, but to embody in words the underlying classical conception of truth and beauty of which both his critical theories and his moral beliefs were products. In this he seems to me unique among the poets of his day, for in him alone I find clear evidence that the intellectual, ratiocinative processes of the mind were as keenly alert as the creative impulses and in general harmony with them.

He was conscious, as a follower of Bacon could not fail to be, of his situation in a changing world; and his awareness of the tendencies of his time, as products of men's thoughts and actions and so within the power of men to guide, gave him a strong sense of responsibility towards society, and a desire to evoke the same conscientiousness in his contemporaries. He could not help being a propagandist, in his art, in his criticism, and in his conversation. And because he was so strongly aware of the relationship

which exists between moral and social tendencies and the trends of literary taste and practice, he could not help being as much a moralist and social reformer as he was a literary critic. Writing was his special activity, and he conceives himself as performing for literature a work analogous to Bacon's work for learning in general; but the field of literature is broad, and in his drama, in his epigrammatic and occasional verse, and in his prose essays, he finds opportunities to exercise the moral and social critic in him alongside the literary critic and stylist. In the very best of his lyric poetry, as I have tried to show elsewhere,¹ he does something more: there theory and practice are at one, absorbed in creative activity, so that the springs of both are revealed, and the underlying classical conception of the nature of truth and beauty, which, in one way or another, actuates all his work, is realized in complete and satisfying form.

Swinburne called attention to the *Discoveries* in terms of the highest enthusiasm, as a little-known work deserving the utmost praise, and rated it above the *Essays* of Bacon as "superior in truth of insight, breadth of view, vigour of reflection and concision of eloquence". He was obviously not aware that the book consisted largely of translations—some free, some close—from Latin authors, and the warmth of his praise for it as an original work had a curiously harmful effect on its reputation; for when later critics assembled and displayed the source-passages of Jonson's widespread borrowings, it was almost as if false pretensions had been unveiled and a piece of most presumptuous plagiarizing laid bare. Of course no such thing had really happened; but because, as a result, the book has come, I believe, to be under-valued, I have tried to show what I think its originality and significance do consist in.

It should not, I am convinced, be regarded as a mere haphazard collection of *Loci Critici*, compiled from unrelated scraps thrown together at random. It contains an assortment of short aphoristic passages, many of them striking examples of vivid translation into pithy, imaginative prose, which may be the nucleus of a projected work after the manner of several such compilations by Erasmus. It also contains, I maintain, the makings of an anti-Machiavellian treatise on statecraft; and a number of completed essays on moral topics, written in a style so rich and varied, and moving with such assurance over so great a range between the grandiloquent and the comic-colloquial, between the passionate and the impersonal, that the writer might fairly claim first place among Jacobean prose-stylists. And, most important of all, it contains a body of consis-

¹ *The Criterion*, Vol. XIII, No. LII.

tent critical thought, the study of which is essential to the understanding of Jonson's mind and art, and which constitutes it a work of major significance in the history of English criticism. Moreover it has, even now, in spite of the archaic idiom of its thought, a message of sanity and grace that writers and readers of today might do well to lay to heart.

ADDITIONAL NOTE.

Since writing the above, it has become clear to me that the concluding portion of the book, which I have described as a fragmentary *De Poetica*,¹ should be considered as a sixth group, in no way connected with the fifth, to which it is in some details redundant, and in others contradictory. I take this group to consist of a series of notes, intended, perhaps, as the basis for lectures of a formal and academic sort. These notes are culled mainly from Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Quintilian, Horace and Daniel Heinsius, and are not digested into anything personal or characteristic of Jonson. They set out the accepted doctrines and definitions of the day, without commenting on them, as if that were left to be done by the speaker *extempore*: and if Professor Sisson's recent discovery² indicates that Jonson lectured for a time at Gresham College, then here, perhaps, are some of his lecture-notes.

¹ 2346-2815.

² *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 Sept., 1951.

V

THE POETRY OF LILIAN BOWES LYON

by MARGARET WILLY

WITH the death of Lilian Bowes Lyon in the summer of 1949, at the age of fifty-three, the world of contemporary letters lost a poet of rare integrity and maturity of vision. Quietly pursuing her own way, following no 'school' or fashion, her voice might well have been lost amid more strident ones demanding notice during the inter-war years. Her work has, however, always enjoyed its small but appreciative following among discriminating readers of literary reviews such as *The Listener* and *The Wind and the Rain*, which published many of her poems. Her output was not considerable; but quantity is no criterion of worth. The five thin volumes of verse published at fairly regular intervals between 1934 and 1946, and brought together in her *Collected Poems* of 1948, contain sufficient poems of lasting value to ensure her a modest, but certain, place in twentieth-century English poetry.

This poet's own acute self-criticism, and still more that humility which was one of her most admirable traits as a human being, would have been discomfited by any extravagant praise; and I do not intend to embarrass her memory with it. I shall, instead, attempt to indicate a few of the excellences of a poetry which deserves to be more widely known than it is; and to show some of the reasons why her work should remain, to her admirers, a source of continuing satisfaction—a satisfaction undiminished, and if anything deepened, by repeated readings.

Few contemporary poets have succeeded in evoking more vividly than does Lilian Bowes Lyon the essence of a particular landscape: one engraved so deeply upon her imagination, so bound up with her individual way of seeing life, that its familiar features have become the natural and inevitable currency of her thought. In this use of the images of her native countryside she resembles, among contemporaries, the Cumberland poet, Norman Nicholson; and she, too, derives from an austere and rocky northern landscape—"Hill's edge, rock halt above the foundering pasture, ~~sinewy~~ ground". As powerfully as Emily Brontë, a century earlier, communicated through her poems the wild bleakness of the Yorkshire

moors, this poet gives us the stubborn character of the "ground-swell earth" of Northumberland: swept by the elements, a craggy upland of "tough and moorland grass" and "stone-bred stream", the mournful cry of curlew, plover and "silvery lapwing" echoing over the "fanged and pirate fell". Her alert and appreciative response to the countryside is not, however, confined to these more austere aspects of her own county: delighting as she does in such serener sights as "mistily-burning sheaves That light some lean gold graveyard of the summer"; the "glint hush" and "clovery texture Of evening at pasture"; or plough-horses moving in a "cocoon of golden steam", flanks lacquered by early morning sunbeams, and Duchess, the great black mare, taking "the hill as a ship, figure-head noble".

But no more than Emily Brontë is she merely the sensitive observer and recorder of externals. Almost always this "too-memorable Earth" speaks to her in parables, illuminating, or revealing, some profound truth of the human spirit: her appreciation of temporal beauty is charged with the constant perception of a timeless and transcendent inner significance. An old oak, crumbling, stands symbolic of "centuries of patience"; the stony upland, where the green ends and the air grows thin, of that austere height ("the crag's adventure"), lonely and bare above the corn-filled valley, to which her spirit must climb. The example of the fox-glove and the wild rose on the "foam-remembering fell" teaches a lesson of stillness; and she rebukes the turbulent discontent of ash-trees "wary of the flesh", as the epitome of those too apt, in restless straining after a remote and unattainable heaven, to miss that one lying close at hand. "This world too," she reminds us, "is the wild God's gift". In the autumn hedgerow she reads the story of "innumerable slow lives"; of

Men like trees, that tower but touch the sky
They cannot and are felled one by one—

yet whose eventual

Leafless victory stands, where nothing stood.

Everywhere the belief is implicit that all life is one, the human drama played out in field and stream and wood: that the experience of heart and spirit has always its counterpart—or its pattern—in the forms of earth. It is for this reason that the earth is loved by Lilian Bowes Lyon, as it was by Gerard Manley Hopkins, on two planes: not only for itself, but as the visible bodying-forth of an invisible truth—"news from a foreign country".

It is significant that the austerity of this poet's native landscape should be emphasized by her showing it less in the sunlight of spring or summer, than in "black, articulate Winter, the leaf gone". In poem after poem—"The White Hare", "Stone Pity", "Frozen Breath", "The Field to the Snow", "A Rough Walk Home", "The Glittering North", "Hedge in Winter", to mention only a few picked at random—it is the season of "stark days", "ebony-gleaming weather": men sheltering under the ragged hedge with horses, "rump to the blizzard", sheep huddled under a stone wall "shagged with snow"—while

the dark falls
Heavily from sheer walls
Of snow-cumbering cloud.

This preoccupation with a winter world is part of the poet's saddened yet accepting awareness that "Time rings a snow-change", to which all who put their faith "in this flesh, in this wraith", must finally submit. It overtakes both animal—the old bull, pathetic in his decadence, the white hare crouched in the stiffened bracken, letting winter go over her, the passionate mating season past all too soon; and human—the man and woman in the poem "The Feather", who had once loved each other, but now walked side by side up the hill with nothing left to say.

Suffering is, to Lilian Bowes Lyon, implicit in the texture of living; interwoven so inextricably that it is inevitable for all who draw breath. She is never unaware of that

abyss
In which men suffer till their souls forget
Even to breathe, 'I shall be, who am not'.
(*"Remembering the Adored"*);

of the dangers involved in the mere act of existence, still more of giving love to another human being. In "Arctic Rose" she writes of the world of a woman's love as a

Towering cliff without foothold, and fathomless fall.

This image of the perilous cliffs of the spirit recalls that anguished cry of Hopkins:

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed;

and it recurs frequently throughout Miss Bowes Lyon's work. She writes, in "Men Climbing", of those who "bridge blue-fanged crevasse with only a spider's courage . . . risk all upon a rope"; in "Carved in the

Delicate Eye", of "summitless crags . . . Frightening, tawny and steep"; or, in "Build above Babel's Din", of the hands

anonymous and heroic
Rubbed raw by the slipping rope.

More powerfully than anywhere, perhaps, is this image used in one of the last, and most profoundly moving, of her poems, "Save Our Souls":

Let down, let down, down, down,
To sightless deeps, your tenuous ropes . . .
Dark is our lake, whose shiver laps
The mountain's midnight wall. But crags have tops
That shine serenely . . .
On rose-leaf heights we too were born,
But spirit falters, or the proud foot slips;
We fell so far that none may hear us moan
Save you, save you perhaps . . .

The world, as she has experienced it, is a place "Of turmoil, and the attrition of salt tears": a turmoil from which, for the living, there is no escape. From "the black furrow there's no turning back", she declares in "Northumbrian Farm"; and in "House in Mallorca", seeing the petals from the Judas tree fall "fiery with suffering", and the "mountain of difficult beauty" rising across the street, she is grateful for the sufficiency of the primitive old house opposite, with open door "gathering man over its simple threshold." Thus, again and again, will she turn some external glimpse, from what might have been a mere descriptive piece and nothing more, into an implicit meditation upon the whole of human life. In one of the most memorable of all her poems, "Stone Pity", she sees men groping like shepherds in search of lost sheep through "a frail white universe", where "We too, lose hurricane-proof hope"; and the very stones cry out in pity, not only at the fate of the doomed sheep, but

for all
Creation, for love latent, summer breath
Of trapped souls under the turf, hearing the huge fall
Of coal-dust Death.

It is this pity, bred of a pain proved on her own pulses, that is one of the keynotes of her poetry: mourning over all creatures born to suffering—from the mute swan dying, the shot hawk, "bright feather fading and night found", to man himself, who has travelled so far from original innocence to his "massacred-innocent wars . . . tuberculous towns".

Her perception of the pity and pathos of the human condition, the simple dignity of man bearing adversity, transcends her indignation at his follies, and informs with rare sympathy her glimpses of a variety of human beings. There is the "immaculate old lady" of "The Hermitage"; her house, like her life, a monument of "decent reticence", until death subjects it to the indignity of invasion by the prying eyes, probing fingers, of the auction crowd. There is the singer "quavering, for grudged pennies, in the street, As it might be an old song-bird, suffering-tame"; or the refugee outside the lighted window, looking in for a moment from the night. Most poignant of all these human portraits, perhaps, in its restraint yet aching compassion, is that called "A Son": describing the patient grief of a middle-aged farm-labourer and his wife for their only child—a boy "with a bird's glint, and wheat-straw hair", killed by a stray bomb jettisoned on their cottage:

Great with unspendable centuries of maternity,
 'At least he had struck seven', she said, 'this year—'
 Of different grace; of blood.
 The man looks bent; yet neither girds at God,
 Remembering it was beautiful while it lasted.

"The pity of war, the pity war distilled", to use Wilfred Owen's phrase, fills all Lilian Bowes Lyon's later poetry: for the young, dead soldier; for

the hamlet burned;
 The sawdust child, the seven-year-old toy
 That tore in half too easily;
 for
 the plain men broken majestically as bread—

amongst whom, during the devastation of the bombing, she lived in the East End and shared the "roofless years". 'Forsaking the more rarefied air of her solitary and "soaring heights" for the warmth of common humanity, she marvelled that she

might have passed
 That bravery by for ever.

Yet the impulse which drove her to Stepney in 1940 is evident much earlier in her poetry: in the intense sympathy with the lot of the poor expressed in poems like "Depressed Area", or "Pastoral", lamenting those "ploughed by poverty under" while "wolves sing harvest-home"; or in

the fierce indignation, in her later "Industrial City by Moonlight", which cries out against

this kiln of shames . . .
The catacombs of the martyrs
Who propped your coal-pit sky.

So pervasive for her is the existence of pain throughout creation, that her consciousness of it takes on a cosmic quality: when she sees speedwell in a field, it seems suddenly to her "as though the blue sky bled" to look down on the countless dumb tragedies of earth. Yet no more than her middle-aged couple mourning their child does she "gird at God": she has that wisdom which understands that suffering is an integral part of the completed pattern—necessary to the spirit's full development in its journey towards maturity. "Provident growth at passion's hard expense", she calls it in "Evening in Stepney". Knowing that to live is to suffer ("grass-mowings we are, groundsel of suffering"), she has made the further discovery that to suffer is to grow; and, as far back as the opening poem in the first volume she published, proclaims her attitude to the value of suffering in human experience: "I bring you good tidings of great sorrow." For one who recognizes how often "Beauty and terror kiss", and that "Most beauty is signed with sorrow", there can be no accepting the one while rebelling against the other; and, indeed, no desire to reject adversity, in a poet who also realizes that some

infinite seed
Enlarges your desolation,

and that there is no other, easy path to wholeness:

Spire of sorrow,
Slender and tense you have risen,
You have taken your flight easily
From this bitter ground . . .
You have pinned sorrow to heaven,
Serene at a bound.

("Spire")

There are indeed few of her poems which do not bear witness to this truth; and to the completeness with which their author has learned "To sift the difficult splendour from despair." Sensing stillness at the storm's centre ("news of calms . . . In the flux of deafening adversity"), she obeys the "wild consolation" of lapwing and plover which cry—in "Northumbrian Farm"—"O weave, child, weave a bravery through despair".

It is in this poem that she describes—with quiet anger against the “gentlemen of England, now abed” who are responsible—how

The half-shot-away hare . . .
Stitches a precious thread
Of blood in the upland turf—oh learning to be dead.

“*Learning to be dead.*” It is a favourite theme of hers, this constant need to learn how to die: a lesson for which, in our want of wise passiveness, our rebellion against the losses of living, “We lose the knack”. The idea is followed through from this early poem to the war-time *Evening in Stepney* and her last volume, *A Rough Walk Home*, published only a few years before her death. In “The Small Hours” she implores “Post-midnight hours . . . pull down our pillared house”—turning each stone so that the released green life, “Unused to light, may bend itself to deliverance”; and out of death, the crumbling of civilization,

New love may spring to illuminate the humble;
And havoc shall be an angel that passed over.

In the poem “Return”, she confesses that “My dreams died on the road”, and receives the answer: ‘*Then dare to arrive without them.*’ Having reached the stage of “Knowing that we have nothing, nothing are”, she has also arrived at the wisdom of the realization:

Blest be the poor whose dreams died on the road;
The people whose vision perished.

Only through these successive deaths—of illusion, of hope, of pride, of self—and coming at last empty-handed, can the spirit grow, slowly and painfully, to its full stature. It is Keats’s “dying into life”; the Gospel’s “He that loses his life shall find it”.

It is not only her knowledge of the ultimate enrichment of the human personality in wisdom and understanding, that sustained her and reconciled her to the sufferings of existence. Lilian Bowes Lyon had a religious faith which afforded her the absolute conviction of a something-after-death—a “harborage certain”. “Wakening she knew how perishable death had been”, she writes at the end of “Arctic Rose”; and, in “Cobweb Courage”, she speaks of the life that

soaring, charts
A path from glooms precipitous into the sun,
Till ghost be given back, grief gone,
Till ~~char~~ beauty’s been achieved for ever.

For her, as for Emily Brontë, death assumes different guises in different moods. Sometimes, in poems like “The Sleeper”, “On the Cliffs”, “Riverland”, it appears as a longed-for rest from the struggle of living—a flowing “into peace for ever”:

Towards that further-agleam fall, that union, tremble our rounded
days
Who dream already of light-linked pools profound with peace.

At others, with echoes again of Emily, and of Wordsworth’s Lucy,

Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course
With rocks, and stones and trees,

death stands for the release of the immortal essence into Nature; becoming “Felicitously no-one, free to share” all experience. We find this in such lines as

He was free of a sudden to ponder the slow birth
Of mountains, share the articulate hush of streams . . .
Lovely with sleep he turned the lock of Nature . . .
(“Death in Summer”);

or in a poem like “The Passive Hands”:

From these now passive, quiet, corrected hands
Flow massive rivers, roll the molten lands;
There is so much pulsing universe released
By this heart’s abdication, the annulment of this breast.

But most often we hear the mystic’s longing for wholeness through communion with the Source of all being: that consummation of experience, that completion of the personality in which the death of the body means to be “chosen away to brightness”; the final resolution of conflict for one liberated at last from

the split seas of [our] nature,
The dividing thunders, trouble and shiver
Of tides moon-entangled.

Here on earth “Heart and spirit are roving, hiveless bees”; vision vouchsafed only fleetingly in the privileged moment—for “Light on the water hurts our human eyes”. Only after “breath is gathered to the giver” can fulfilment become a permanent instead of a random and transitory possession, and restless striving be stilled. To quote again from the poignantly lovely “Death in Summer”:

When morning broke, he seemed to have gained in stature;
Like other turbulent boys, fulfilled as he.

Or, as she ends "The Blind Tramp", one of the most memorable poems in her whole collection:

Some covet life to lose it; some agree
With Christ at last, like dew the sun draws up.

It is these two lines, perhaps, which more eloquently than any others express the calm confidence of her Christian faith; taken with another of her last poems, "A Shepherd's Coat", serene in its echoes of the twenty-third Psalm:

now it is gloaming,
Simple and provident, folding the numbered lambs . . .

Between the lily in bud and the lily opening
Love is, and love redeems.
Come haven, come your hush, horizoning arms.

I shall not want, I wake renewed by death,
A shepherd's coat drawn over me.

In language and in rhythms, there is considerable diversity to be found in the *Collected Poems*. And yet, within that diversity, one constant influence and discipline may be discerned: that of her native landscape, austere, almost ascetic in its outlines—stripped of superfluous ornament like her art in its maturity; a place, moreover, where the relationship between Man and Nature is most often a grim and unremitting struggle for supremacy. How powerfully such an environment coloured her sense of life, and decided the kind of imagery she should use in her poetry, I have tried to show earlier* in this essay. Constantly she drew upon familiar scenes—"the bare garden steep, the stone-ribbed land" so often snow- and storm-swept—for the images which would best symbolize her apprehension of reality.

In such short lyrics as "The Feather", "The Sleeper", "Hedge in Winter", "The Grave", "Death in Summer", or "A Dizzily Hung Field", metres as well as language, the whole structure of the verse, bear the stamp of the same discipline: spare, frugal in their grave loveliness, and an economy unencumbered by any scrap of unwanted decoration. These are poems of a pellucid clarity, immediate in their emotional

impact on the reader, and carrying a sense of that absolute inevitability which can be so satisfying:

Cool on the wind the curlews call you,
Weaving a wish, as Penelope wove
Her perpetual tapestry: Nothing befall you,
Love, my love, my love.

(“English Autumn, 1944”)

Lyrics like these recur throughout her work, from the early volume, *The White Hare*, right through to *A Rough Walk Home*, from which the last quotation is taken. But there are, on the other hand, many longer pieces, especially in the middle period of her life as a poet, which are far less capable of immediate comprehension and enjoyment. This is no uncommon difficulty where the poet is attempting, as she almost always is, to communicate the kind of experience that is more elusive than any other of precise definition: that of the spirit “groping towards a truth”, as Keats put it, “straining at particles of light in a great darkness”. Every artist struggling to find adequate expression for some perception of truth, perhaps not yet fully grasped even by himself, must encounter this difficulty of communication in more or less degree. That is one reason why Lilian Bowes Lyon’s poetry demands, for its fullest appreciation, not so much an effort of mental concentration on the reader’s part as a spiritual attunement: a sympathetic receptivity to experiences for which words are, at best, often so inadequate a vehicle of expression, a poor substitute for the original flash of vision, the truth only momentarily or dimly perceived.

But even apart from this consideration, a sense of strain—almost, one might say, of *congestion*—still persists in much of the work of her “middle period”; as if, instead of controlling her own technique, she is being stifled by it—outmatched in an unequal struggle for mastery over her medium. Poems like “A Panther Teach Men Patience”, “For Dove Returning”, “I Fall Asleep”, “The Unusual Swan”, and “Keys of the Kingdom”, are knit and knotted so closely as to clog all freedom of flow in the metre, and often to obscure the sense; and a difficult or elusive idea is rendered still more complex by the tortuously craggy architecture of the verse. The conflict here is clearly not confined to the realm of the spiritual experience evoked. We are also watching that of the craftsman wrestling with, and momentarily defeated by, problems of form; still in the difficult process of mastering the mechanics of her medium and evolving an individual way of expression.

Most of these "difficult" poems, which impose a sense of bafflement and unease upon the reader because it is felt by the poet herself, fall, as I say, about midway through her poetic career. It is there, too, that certain mannerisms and echoes of Gerard Manley Hopkins are most pronounced. Even more obviously than most of her contemporaries, Lilian Bowes Lyon came under the spell of Hopkins; who, with Owen, Yeats and Eliot, has been the most powerful modern influence on twentieth-century poetry. As with her fellow-poets, the result is not always happy. As early as her first volume, *The White Hare*, she is using compound adjectives in the Hopkins manner: "silk-soft milk" (compare his "silk-sack clouds"), or "the summer's-day-dim wood"; a phrase as reminiscent of Hopkins as "You stuff of me, stone pity", and the Hopkinsque inversion of "sheep [who] hard-breathing huddle". But it is in the two middle volumes, *Bright Feather Fading* and *Morning is a Revealing*, in which the most difficult and least satisfying of her work is concentrated, that these mannerisms crowd upon each other, threatening at times to swamp her poetic individuality in mere imitation. The title poem of *Bright Feather Fading* is a good example, setting the note for many of the poems that follow. "Beauty's wind-ply wing", "fire-shorn he lies now", are pure Hopkins—the Hopkins of *The Windhover*; and, most of all,

He loved to shoulder
A far cloud or brush the noon-
Slight sickle moon,
Joy-hovering missed
No ground-note that was grist
To grindstone hunger . . .

In these two volumes the use of compound adjectives—"our born-of-April breath" (recalling Hopkins's "feel-of-primrose hands"), "washing-over-us water", "my wan-through-window west", "morning's caught-upon-eyelash candour"—is less successful, perhaps, than anything else in the whole collection.

Evening in Stepney, published in 1943, shows a noticeable falling-away of these imitations and extravagances. There is a growth in assurance in the voice which speaks here, bred, perhaps, of the chastening experience of human suffering in the East End during the air raids. By the time her last book, *A Rough Walk Home*, was published, the note of authority had deepened into a complete realization of her powers as a poet: the influence of Hopkins not discarded—it is neither possible, nor desirable, for an artist to disown another who has profoundly influenced some stage in his

or her development—but assimilated into the individual technique she had at last perfected. In poems like “A Shepherd’s Coat”, “The New Snow”, “Return”, “Remembering the Adored”, the magnificent “Save our Souls”, and “A Rough Walk Home”—searching explorations of the experience of the spirit, in which form and content are now felicitously fused—she attains full maturity, both as artist and as human being.

It is more than ever a “wintered world”, steeled to hard endurance, that we find in these last poems, written when the poet was desperately ill and seldom, if ever, out of pain. Yet, as always, she is able to perceive that things

lovelier grow
Now winter-pierced they wait for snow.

That symbolic field, stripped “bone bare” by the gleaners, has, she discovers, though “naked, sad and gaunt . . . grown to new dimensions”. Far from blurring or dulling her perceptions, pain seemed rather to heighten the intensity of her vision. Characteristic of this courageous and unbroken spirit are the last words in the last book she published:

Light me a candle, fan the whole
Black world to joy, my generous God.

Note the epithet, “generous”—used in such circumstances as those of her last years. It is the key to the personality of the poet who to the end, and in the face of such obstacles, continued to soar

With mariner wing untamed
By universe outrageous.

VI

FREDERICK JAMES FURNIVALL

by BEATRICE WHITE

I WANT to write about F. J. Furnivall's work for the best reason in the world, because I like it. I want to write about it because the glowing centre of his literary enthusiasms was his Elizabethan studies. I want to write about it particularly because I think it a pity that those qualities of breadth, humility, and humanity, characteristic of the more genial and expansive scholarship of his age, are, in these days of intensive specialization, being dangerously reduced to fit the increasingly limited scope of both field and vision.

Though Furnivall had about him much of the exuberant adventurousness of those Elizabethans he loved and understood so well, his lines fell in quiet places. But in company with the more thoughtful and sensitive of his contemporaries, the pattern of his life was conditioned by the rapidly changing values, economic, social, spiritual, of his time. In his reactions to these he was always in the vanguard with the fighters. He was born in Egham in 1825, when the fourth George was still on the throne, and before the first railway train had made its journey from Liverpool to Manchester. Descended from a line of Cheshire yeomen, he was the son of a surgeon who had attended Shelley's first wife and had some acquaintance with the poet. As a boy, living by Datchet meads, he grew up with that love for the river which became one of the major passions of his life. It was typical of the man that his river excursions were never made without risk. He never learned to swim. In 1841 he came up to London to attend lectures at University College. Later, in October, 1842, he travelled by coach to Cambridge, and entered Trinity Hall, to read Mathematics. It was during his Cambridge days that he and a friend built a narrow wager-boat to a new and successful design.

Returning to London after taking his B.A. degree in 1846, he studied Law and was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn in January, 1849, establishing himself then as a conveyancer. Those early days as a lawyer familiarized him with the handling of documents and implanted a taste which was to

bear fruit years later in his work for the Early English Text Society. Those were days of social upheaval. Furnivall soon fell under the spell of John Malcolm Ludlow and Frederick Denison Maurice, then Professor of Theology at King's College and Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn, and, like his friends, he became alive to the urgent necessity for reforming the appalling industrial conditions which then prevailed among the poor. It seemed to this group of self-styled Christian Socialists that the evils of the 'sweating system' might be remedied by a scheme of co-operation, and it was at this juncture that Furnivall produced his first published work, the manifesto, "Association a necessary part of Christianity." This rare pamphlet appeared in 1850. In it Furnivall expresses himself if not with eloquence then with that honest, deliberate forthrightness which characterizes his later work. 'God has given us the principle which should regulate our dealings with our fellow-men. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so unto them", he begins. Associations for working men failed, but the group of Christian Socialists, led by Ludlow and Maurice, convinced of the essential need for better education of the adult workers, succeeded in founding the Working Men's College, opened in October, 1854. The College was deeply indebted to its staff of voluntary workers, Ruskin among them, and Furnivall was one of the most indefatigable. He never ceased to be concerned for its welfare, and for the first ten years of its existence he taught English Grammar and Literature there, for five nights a week. It was the nearest he came to being a regular academic. But it was on the social side that his influence was most valuable, and it is his labours in this field that are gratefully emphasized in the College Journals—the dances he instituted, the Sunday outings he conducted, the Sculling club he founded, and the Volunteer Corps of which he became a valiant Captain when the need of his country seemed to demand an active militia.

But the Working Men's College did not entirely consume his leisure. He heard Chopin play and Jenny Lind sing. The man who sold his books in 1851 to give £100 to the woodcutters then on strike was no mere paper idealist. A passionate interest in social problems was the keynote of his life and the guiding principle of his subsequent research. The motive force of his tireless industry in making accessible the splendid store of our early literature lay not so much in mere antiquarianism or his interest in language as in discovering the social life of the past. He said to Dyboski, 'I never cared a bit for Philology; my chief aim has been throughout to illustrate the social condition of the English people in the past.'

In his impressionable years he came into contact with many famous men. Let me quote from Furnivall himself, on one of the most formative friendships he made in those days. "When I left College in the spring of 1846, a friend gave me the first two volumes of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*. The book was a revelation to me, opening out the new worlds of Nature and Art; and its gorgeous passages delighted me. Ruskin became one of my gods." The great man had a lasting influence upon him, and he writes, "I never met any man whose charm of manner at all approached Ruskin's. Partly feminine it was, no doubt; but the delicacy, the sympathy, the gentleness and the affectionateness of his way, the fresh and penetrating things he said, the boyish fun, the earnestness and the interest he showed in all deep matters, combined to make a whole which I have never seen equalled. Association with Ruskin was a continual delight. Then and there (from the first meeting) began a friendship which was for many years the chief joy of my life."

Furnivall had, as well as an easy knack of making friends, the power of arousing enthusiasm. He got things done by the simple expedient of diverting the boundless flood of his vitality upon the object in view. Nowhere did he do this with more rewarding result than in his long association with the Philological Society. He joined the Society, which was founded in 1842, in 1847, becoming one of its Honorary Secretaries in 1853 and Sole Secretary in 1862, a position which he held till his death in 1910.

The story of the *New English Dictionary* has been told before, in better words than mine. Suffice it to say that the suggestion of a pressing need for a new dictionary was made by Furnivall to Dean Trench in May, 1857, and was at once productive. Its immediate repercussion was the formation of a committee consisting of Furnivall, Herbert Coleridge, and Trench, to collect 'unregistered words in English'. Dissatisfaction with existing lexicography proceeded no further at this preliminary stage than the formulation of the desire to supplement the later editions of the dictionaries of Johnson and Richardson. The preliminary suggestion of a merely supplementary dictionary gradually gave way to the courageous idea of an entirely new work, and here again, the main impetus seems to have been Furnivall's. Already he had become interested enough in early English writings to realize the lexicographical potentialities of the unexplored field. In January, 1858, the Society formally undertook the sponsoring of a New Dictionary of the English Language, placing the work in the hands of two committees, one literary and historical, consisting of Trench, Coleridge, and Furnivall, the other etymological. In due course

(1859) the 'Proposal for the publication of a New English Dictionary by the Philological Society' appeared. It is difficult for us in this day and age to realize that English philological studies were then in their infancy and that the committees were prepared to work to an arbitrary three-period plan. However, despite this limitation, which time and experience rectified, the main outlines of a constructive plan and the system of rules for contributors were stated with forceful precision and clear judgement: 'In the treatment of individual words the *Historical principle* will be uniformly adopted. . . . In each period we shall ask all our contributors to give us extracts for words now obsolete, in order that we may, by comparing such extracts, ascertain the last appearance in our literature of every such obsolete word.'

Herbert Coleridge, the first editor, died in 1861, and the command fell to Furnivall, who was resolute for many years in directing, encouraging and controlling his unwieldy army of volunteer sub-editors. Increasingly aware of the enormity of the task and the length of time required to develop it, he evolved the idea of compiling a Concise Dictionary to bridge the gap. In embarking on this new project Furnivall was bravely sanguine and over-confident. The earlier and larger scheme he never for a moment lost sight of and was diligent in his pursuance of it. But the Concise Dictionary never saw the light, and the long, long trail to the N.E.D. was gradually littered with the remains of exhausted sub-editors. Furnivall himself, though, continued dauntless, and when he handed over to Murray, following the contract on a legal basis made for publication with the O.U.P. in 1879, he bequeathed to him a ton and three-quarters of materials which had accumulated under his roof from the Dictionary's inception to that time. His own efforts at contribution were prodigious. He was responsible for some 30,000 quotations, a Herculean labour which deserved the warm approbation it met in the Preface to the N.E.D. Through his early organization of the collecting and sub-editing, and his life-long contributions, the work of Furnivall pervades every page of the Dictionary.¹

It was his intimate connexion with the Dictionary through the Philological Society that convinced Furnivall of the pressing need for

¹ There are two surviving editors of the Dictionary, both past Presidents of the Philological Society, Sir William Craigie and Dr. C. T. Onions. Both continue vigorous philological and literary studies. Craigie edits the Scottish Dictionary and is editing a very important collection of Icelandic Rimur. Dr. Onions is librarian at Magdalen College, Oxford. Craigie has been especially honoured by the government of Iceland, where his name is almost a household word.

making our early literature accessible. In the early 60's he was busy with work for the Roxburghe Club, producing in 1862 a handsome edition of Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*. Without the disarmingly intimate tone of his later *Forewords*, where there is no barrier between writer and reader, the *Preface* to the *Handlyng Synne* is alive with his indignation at the social evils of his time. I have no doubt it was to Furnivall the social historian that this lengthy medieval treatise appealed. His edition, the critical apparatus of which could only, by our modern standards, be considered incomplete, is to me chiefly remarkable for the masterly and vivid analysis of the contents.

But Furnivall's vital concern for Middle English literature did not confine itself to producing volumes for the somewhat exclusive Roxburghe Club. He induced the Philological Society to publish with its *Transactions* for the year 1858 certain 'Early English Poems and the Lives of Saints (with those of the wicked birds Pilate and Judas)' which he copied, rather inaccurately, from British Museum MSS. His work for the Dictionary must have impressed acutely upon him the immediate necessity for assembling material for the history of the language, and moved him to the most far-reaching decision of his life—to found the *Early English Text Society*. It was characteristic of Furnivall that he gave the praise for the idea to Richard Morris. 'When', he wrote in 1867, 'in 1863 he was sending extracts from English MSS. abroad to be printed in a foreign journal, because there was no journal or Society in England to print them, it *did* seem to me a shame, and that if people only knew it, they'd stop it. The result was the getting up of the E.E.T.S. which, to say the least of it, has done some worthy work for our language and literature.' An early *Prospectus* of the Society summarizes its aims:

The E.E.T.S. was started in 1864 for the purpose of bringing the mass of the Old English Literature within reach of the ordinary student, and of wiping away the reproach under which England has long rested of having felt little interest in the monuments of her early life and language . . . The Society's work divides itself into four classes, viz.: I. The Arthurian and other Romances. II. Works illustrative of our Dialects and the history of our Language, including a series of early English Dictionaries. III. Biblical Translations and Religious Treatises. IV. Miscellaneous works of various authors that cannot be included in either of the other three divisions, and having special regard to the illustration of Early English life.

The second division was the one framed to help on especially the work of the great Dictionary, but it was the last, that which was intended to lay

bare the social life of the past, in which Furnivall himself was particularly interested. The Extra Series of the E.E.T.S. was begun in 1867 to supplement the scope of the Original Series, which drew only upon MSS. It was to include works previously printed, but of great rarity.

Furnivall's contribution to the work of the Society was gargantuan—thirty-nine volumes, all told, and I, who have edited only three volumes for the E.E.T.S., can realize what immense pains and labour went to their making. Anyone consulting the E.E.T.S. list of publications can become familiar with them; they range from the *Minor Works of Occleve* to collections of Wills, to the *Chester Depositions*, to the *Babees Book*, which we all know, to *Thomas Vicary* and *Andrew Borde*, to *Thynne's Animadversions*, to the *Tale of Beryn*, to the *English Conquest of Ireland*, and finally to the posthumously published *Hali Meidenhad*.

The extent of the man's reading is astonishing, but not less to be admired are his powers of memory and ready correlation. Most characteristic of his work, however, is the way in which he leavened everything he wrote with the peculiar impish, insinuating, appealing charm of his personality. It was one of the delights of my youth to skim through the *Forewords* of Furnivall's E.E.T.S. volumes. And what pleasure must these prefaces, so forthright, so wise, so friendly and so full of fun, have brought to many whose basic store of learning was, if possible, less than mine. Furnivall never rode the high horse to Parnassus, and when he was angry, Furnivallo Furioso, as one of his critics called him, came into the open. He always spoke out. This was because, to quote his own words, he 'conceived himself entitled to write Prefaces as to a circle of his friends'.

This is particularly evident, perhaps, in his edition of *The Child-Marriages, Divorces, and Ratifications etc. in the Diocese of Chester 1561-6* (E.E.T.S. O.S. 108) 1897. Its personal note is irresistible. He dedicates the work to: 'The Antiquaries of Cheshire, in the hope that they will at once hang one of their number, to encourage the rest forthwith to print all the depositions and other valuable material in the diocesan registry at Chester which they have so long and so culpably left in MS. only.' Furnivall establishes immediately a bond of intimacy between the reader and himself. His directness of approach, his appeals to the reader's clemency to forgive small errors, and the warm familiarity of his tone, amounting to a friendly chat, are totally disarming. He gives us a glimpse of his vigorous methods. He went to Chester in 1893, and at once got down to work on a volume of *Depositions*, for which his years as a conveyancer had peculiarly fitted him:

'I . . . copied for six or eight hours a day (at night I had to edit Shakespeare for three or four hours)—as long as the office rules allowed—till my eyes were tired, and then went up again for three weeks in October . . . Within three months of my starting at the ms. all the text of this volume was in type . . . and within four months I began writing these Forewords.'

He then reverts to his life-long interest in social studies—'I can safely say that no ms. or print that I had previously handled seemed so to let me into the life of its times as this volume of *Chester Depositions*.' This is a strong recommendation from the editor of Stubb's *Abuses*, and the *Babees Book*. But let me draw your attention to the type of personal note that makes the scholar into the man in the street:

'I should like to have seen how the little married folk treated one another, and how they were made much of by parents and friends, at table, in dances, games, &c. and whether they were demure, and fild with the consciousness of their wedded state, or rompt and flirted with other children, turnd jealous, and got into pets &c.'

Capgrave's Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria, edited by Carl Horstmann, with *Forewords* by F. J. Furnivall, 1893, (O.S. 100), contains some very straight Furnivall-esque hitting at slovenly editing, the frontal attack being ushered in with a characteristically irrelevant flourish of one of his most deeply ingrained prejudices: 'Capgrave being an Englishman, was, of course, by race and nature, a funkey, and had an inordinate reverence for kings and rank. This vice or quality is ingraind in the nation. . . . In the matter of kings, dukes, &c. we are a poor lot.'¹ The unfortunate Horstmann comes in for a hearty basting:

'I could not help telling Dr. Horstmann that his edition was a "mess"; . . . I don't pretend to set myself over him as a person who hasn't made as bad or worse messes; no doubt I've made plenty more. The only thing is to confess the blunder and beg our members to excuse it. All our workers can't be of the first class; we must often put up with some of the third and fifth. . . .'

But he had not ended: 'As there's an empty page, and I've long been exercised about the pronunciation of *I* in Shakespeare's time . . .' he proceeds to the discussion, based on Hart and the orthoepists. The only remark I remember is: 'Scotchmen, I believe, still call *my "ma"* (*a* as in

¹ The same prejudice lies behind his odd attempt (referred to *infra*, p. 75) to prove that Browning's family was of very humble extraction.

father), but then a Scotchman is capable of anything. As Andrew Borde says, "Trust yow no Skot."

Perhaps the most well-known and valuable of Furnivall's E.E.T.S. volumes is the one on *Early English Meals and Manners* (Babees Book), with Forewords, which are still useful, on Education in Early England. The critical reader is warned not to look gift horses in the mouth. 'Prefaces are gift horses; and if mine buck or shy now and then, I ask their riders to sit steady, and take it easy.' What has *order*, we might well ask, to do with generous giving? Even if it is the vivid personal touches in his *Forewords* that we remember most easily, and the sudden swift and open attacks on such malefactors as Horstmann, Payne Collier, and on a different scale, Louis Napoleon, we ought never to forget that it was through his E.E.T.S. that Furnivall, exploiting the wealth of our ancient literature from sources untapped before, established by means of it a lasting comity of scholars united by the same aim—the search for truth through the strait way of literary and linguistic research.

From the 60's to the 80's his furious energies were directed to the constructive activity of the foundation and direction of further societies for promoting English studies. The first of these, was, perhaps, the most important, the Chaucer, founded 1868, 'To do honour to Chaucer, and to let the lovers and students of him see how far the best unprinted mss. of his works differd from the printed texts.' The establishment of this society put Chaucer study on a new and sure footing. Furnivall, himself, was responsible for the monumental parallel six-tent edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, which he dedicated to his American friend, F. J. Child, as well as for certain volumes in the Life-Records, and for the 'Trial-Forewords to the Parallel Text Edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems, (with a try to set Chaucer's works in their right order of time)' 1871. The latter has about it much of what W. P. Ker called 'the spring and freshness of a life unimpeded by ordinary academic routine'. For instance, his note on 'Gammon and Guess mixt-up with Chaucer's life' records a lively conversation with Millais on 'outsiders, who, even in a man's own time, can't help putting meanings into his work that he did not think of.'

His next portentous undertaking was the editing and printing with J. W. Hales, in three volumes, of the Folio MS. of the *Percy Ballads*. This earned the deep gratitude of F. J. Child, who dedicated to Furnivall his collection of English and Scottish Popular Ballads, 5 Vols. 1882. 'My dear Furnivall,' he says, 'without the Percy MS. no one would pretend to make a collection of the English Ballads, and but for you that

MS. would still, I think, be beyond reach of man, yet exposed to destructive chances.' Out of this important venture grew the *Ballad Society*, 1886, 'to print all Early English MS. Ballads, and reprint the Roxburgh, Bagford, and other collections of printed Ballads'. Furnivall's interest in this society was almost entirely that of a social historian, and he edited, together with J. W. Hales, from the Percy MS. a volume he called, not inappropriately, 'Loose and Humorous Songs'. Furnivall thought it expedient to justify and protect himself by issuing a circular to members:

'In consequence of one Subscriber having turnd round on Mr. Furnivall, and threatened to indict him and his kind helpers for the publication of these songs, he is obliged to ask all fresh Subscribers, and Purchasers of the Ballads, who also want the Songs, for a pledge that they will not repeat the annoyance named.'

The New Shakspere Society, founded in 1873, with Browning as its President, 'to promote the intelligent study of Shakspere, settle the succession of his plays, and to print his Works in their original spelling, with illustrative treatises', had, with its offshoots, a more stormy history. Furnivall's eagerness to publish the results of his own researches with the salutary purpose of provoking criticism and further research is everywhere evident. We should remember too, before we follow him into controversy, a passage from his excellent and most useful edition for the Ballad Society of *Robert Laneham's Letter*: 'Let men be themselves in their writings, and let critics, and "Unsuited-to-the-dignity-of-print" &c. be blowed!' Furnivall was just the man to be roused and not frightened off by adverse criticism. His main Shakespearian thesis was that Shakespeare must be studied chronologically and as a whole. To a translation of Gervinus's *Commentaries on Shakespeare* (1874) he wrote a prefatory essay discussing the 'Succession of Shakespeare's work and the use of metrical tests in settling it'. His chief purpose, he says, was to teach beginners how to study the poet. These metrical tests, to which Furnivall gave his approval, brought upon him the ire and ridicule of aesthetic critics, like Swinburne, and the literary world was soon either gratified or shocked by the antics of the pair of them, metaphorically scuffling and punching each other in joyous abandon as 'Pigsbrook' and 'Broheldyke' respectively in the solemn columns of the *Examiner* and the *Spectator*. The affair resulted in the resignation of the Vice-presidents of the Society; but its work went on, and one of its most valuable productions was the issue, between 1880 and 1889, of photographic facsimiles of the Shakespeare Quartos, in forty-three volumes. Furnivall personally

supervised the whole issue and wrote critical introductions to eight of them.

The New Shakspere Society had one provocative member who told me that Furnivall never asked him for a fee—and we may be sure he enjoyed all the rows, as he said he enjoyed all the lavish free teas—I mean G.B.S. There was a grand fracas in 1881. The details I have not unearthed, but I have found the typical Furnivallesque pamphlet it produced. Personally speaking, I would have given a lot to have been present on that earlier occasion, one Sunday afternoon in 1880, when a multitude of hansoms and four-wheelers disgorged a notable collection of famous Victorians who disappeared into Furnivall's house only to reappear half-an-hour later to be driven away in various stages of impotent fury.

In 1876 Furnivall published his *Leopold Shakspere*, using the text of Delius, with an *Introduction* comparable in its theories and tone to his previous work prefixed to the Gervinus. That it met a need is shown most evidently by its popular success. That was the best answer to his adversaries.

Furnivall was an honest rather than a subtle critic. His strong critical common sense appears to most advantage in the unrestrained marginalia which are liberally sprinkled over the books which came into the possession of King's College. For example, he dismisses Halliwell-Phillipps's *Memoranda on the Tragedy of Hamlet*, a pretentious work, not perhaps without some merit, with the remark—'Pooh! What a damned old ass H-P's made of himself.'

1877-78 were the years in which Furnivall produced his *Harrison*, to be followed in 1879 by his edition of *Stubbes*, both works of love, full of good things, and both worthy monuments to his great powers of concentration and co-ordination. In 1881 he returned to the foundation of societies and that year saw the establishment not only of the *Wyclif Society*, but of a much more resounding one—the *Browning Society*. Furnivall had a genuine admiration for the poet's work. Browning was grateful for the recognition and appreciation which the Society, with its productions of his plays and discussions of his obscurities, brought to him. According to G.B.S., who knew and appreciated the man, Furnivall's most misunderstood society was this very *Browning Society*—'Reputed to be an assembly of long-haired Postlethwaite-aesthetes, but really an assembly of elderly ladies for whom Browning was a Nonconformist apostle.' Let me quote from a private letter of Shaw's to me: "F.J.F., who began as an ardent Tennysonian, but got tired of it and took to Browning, worked the Society for the ladies, but had no consideration for

their faith, being himself a muscular Christian agnostic." What, in effect, Furnivall actually committed himself to in print was this statement: "I do not affect to share Browning's religious views. Among our poets and men of the first rank in England, his 'note' in this regard is, his intense belief in a personal God—God in one person, *not* in three, and the immortality of the soul. The first I take as a hypothesis, the second as an imagination; but though these beliefs underlie his whole work, I do heartily desire the spread of the study and the influence of Robert Browning."

The *Shelley Society*, founded in December 1885 'to promote the study of Shelley's works, reprint his original editions and procure the acting of his *Cenci*', sprang, so we are told, from a remark to Henry Sweet: 'I was walking with my friend, Henry Sweet, in Hampstead, and was talking about the Browning Society, when Mr. Sweet asked me why I did not found a Shelley Society. I said: "By Jove, I will; he was my father's friend.'" This involuntary blank verse line was, apparently, the main impulse of the foundation, which, spurred on by Furnivall's boundless vitality, produced *The Cenci* successfully at the Grand Theatre, Islington, 1886. But it met its Waterloo over the production of *Hellas*, when, according to Shaw, Furnivall 'recklessly engaged a full orchestra to accompany a recitation of the poem by Austin Podmore in St. James's Hall, then the chief London Concert room, at a cost out of all proportion to the Society's resources'. It never recovered financially, in spite of all the efforts of its secretary, T. J. Wise. So ended the last of Furnivall's societies. In future he had more leisure to devote to the Sculling Club for men and girls which he had founded at Hammersmith.

His real work continued. Through the medium of the various societies he had founded and fostered, and the interest they aroused, and through the material he provided for later specialists to elaborate he was able to give a powerful impetus to the critical study of English literature. The E.E.T.S. brought him into touch with continental scholarship, and his abundant liberality is amply indicated by his sympathetic attitude to the brigades of foreign scholars on visit to this country. From his table in his favourite A.B.C., or his desk in the B.M., he advised them, encouraged them and controlled their work and their contacts. It has with justice been said of him that 'his whole life was devoted to the advancement of philological study in its widest sense'. In 1884 he was granted a Civil List pension of £150 and his labours in the field of scholarship received recognition from abroad. Described by Ten Brink as 'The learned and devoted student of the great poets of his nation, the tireless and successful explorer of their wealth and generous promoter of German co-labour',

he was made a Ph.D. of Berlin. He now became familiarly known as 'the Doctor'.

That Furnivall's scholarship was limited must be allowed. His familiarity with English of the medieval and Elizabethan periods did not extend down to the eighteenth century. This is the only possible explanation of his begging the publisher to remove from a new edition the Preface to Johnson's Dictionary, taking it to be the work of the latest editor. In Johnson's own words, "Ignorance, Madam, sheer ignorance." But it is a queer lapse on the part of the second editor of the N.E.D.

That he also had some very curious inconsistencies I would be the last to deny. So have we all, but ours are perhaps not so difficult to fit into the jigsaw puzzles of our characters. His absolute honesty and his outspoken directness are qualities so clearly manifested in his work that there is no further need to stress them. But how is such integrity to be reconciled with his mutilation of the Hengwrt MS. of the *Chester Plays of Antichrist*? I cannot defend it, and it can only be a case of familiarity with MSS. destroying all sense of responsibility towards them.¹ He committed the horrible sin of forging footmen ancestors for Browning. Yet I don't think the poet would have cared half so much as his more refined descendants, and a quite genuine ancestor of his *did* once keep an inn, but of course that is a more worthy occupation. Furnivall here obviously allowed his 'anti-snobbery' craze to run right away with him.

That he was an odd neighbour and poked dirt through your letter-box if he suspected you of stealing his pet cat I quite believe, but it is on his endearing qualities, and not on his eccentricities, that I should like to dwell. It is because he was always moved to defend a just principle and a right cause that I honour Furnivall. He was a feminist, and held strong views about the admission of women to the professions; moreover, he thought that Cambridge was preposterously antiquated in withholding degrees from them when they could beat men at their own game. His political and social views¹ were, for his time, advanced, and they are evidences of his perspicacity as much as of his terrier-like combativeness and love of a fight.

Those people now alive, and they are not many, who knew Furnivall, call to mind most vividly the dignity with which he calmly announced in 1910 the certainty of his approaching death. He made no fuss about departing because he was aware how full and productive his life of eighty-five years had been. He deserves to be remembered for his very

¹ See the restrained and sober account of the episode given by Sir Walter Greg; *The Chester Play of Antichrist*, Oxford. 1935. [Introduction, pp. xxi *et seq.*]

real services to learning. He ploughed wide fields, little acres of which other men have laboriously sown.¹

In conclusion I can find no words more appropriately descriptive of him than those he himself wrote of Garrison: 'A truth-seeking, learned, kind-hearted, and humorous fellow he seems to me . . . an antiquarian, a true lover of his country, a hater of shams, lazy lubbers, and evil-doers; a man that one likes to shake hands with, across the rift of years.'

¹ Nor did he despise routine. In spite of his many commitments, he never missed the meetings of his societies, and he kept the Minutes of The Philological Society with scrupulous exactitude (in his own peculiar brand of spelling) for many years. In the same way he kept his own accounts with meticulous detail. I have found among his MSS. at King's his Account Book for the years 1863-5. Some historian of prices ought to consult it. For example, lunches vary between 6d and 3d, and his red ribbon tie cost 8½d: but with this rigid economy the man's quiet charity is evident. £1 paid out in June, 1863, to the Ballast heavers left but a narrow margin for his own expenditure. It is the same man who twelve years before had sold his books for the benefit of the woodcutters on strike. Moreover he had then been only a year married. His wife was Eleanor Dalziel, sister of the W. A. Dalziel who became Secretary of the E.E.T.S. and of the Chaucer Society. (Their surviving child, Perey Furnivall, in his youth a champion cyclist and later a well-known surgeon, was associated with his father in editing the works of Thomas Vicary for the E.E.T.S. It is due to his generosity that most of Furnivall's books and MSS. came to King's College, London.)

VII

A STUDY OF ARTHUR MORRISON

by JOCELYN BELL

At a distance of half a century an age is no longer dismissed as old-fashioned; its historical importance and period singularity are recognized. The Victorians and Edwardians are reappearing, freshly presented in reprints and radio serials and revalued in biography and criticism. Arthur Morrison is among them. Born in 1863, he belongs in literature to the 1890's and the turning century, finishing his best work by 1902 but writing throughout the Edwardian reign until he retired in 1913. He was one of those contemporary best-sellers who could be found on every Edwardian bookshelf, but who vanished in the Great War and were unknown to the new and changed generation which followed; and now that, once again, the novels which made his name are in the bookshops, it is not out of place to attempt an assessment of his literary talent, to determine how much he achieved, and why he did not achieve more.

The 1890's were brilliant, chaotic years: gay, sombre; irresponsible, earnest; years which saw Lottie Collins at the Gaiety and Mrs. Pat Campbell as Paula Tanqueray; which saw Keir Hardie's first Labour Party and the Diamond Jubilee; the Sidney Webbs, Beardsley, and the trial of Oscar Wilde. The literary world introduced its own novelties, from the "incomparable Max" to George Bernard Shaw, and the dramatic explosion of Ibsen had been preceded but a few years previously by that of Zola, when in the 1880's his novels were first translated into English, immediately suppressed, and their publisher imprisoned. If it was an age of aesthetic adventure, it was also an age of moral revolution.

The translations of the French "realistic" novelists, Zola and Flaubert, the Goncourts and Maupassant, had raised a sharp and violent controversy in the English periodical press as to the place of frankness in literature, an outcry which had been countered successfully by prominent critics like Edmund Gosse¹ and lesser known pioneers like Hubert Crackanthorpe,²

¹ The National Review, 1892: The tyranny of the novel.

² The Yellow Book, 1894.

and by 1894 the "new" realistic fiction, though still experimental, was recognized in literary circles and developed by major writers like George Moore and George Gissing, and by minor ones like Henry Harland, "George Egerton", Crackanthorpe, and Grant Allen. Taking its main inspiration from the French writers, it was concerned with the direct portrayal of the social conditions and moral problems of contemporary life, and novelists, claiming broader horizons for their art, asserted their right to deal with any subject, fine or ugly, beautiful or sordid, which was a genuine aspect of human existence. Arthur Morrison belongs to the forefront of this realistic movement, and his *Tales of Mean Streets* which appeared in 1894, were not only the first examples of "mean street" studies, but also a collection of best-sellers which provided a neat generic title for the subsequent studies of slum life which followed in rapid succession from other writers. Morrison's "mean street" realism, however, is in a different category from that of George Moore or Gissing, who used such surroundings as background to the main play of character and moral problem, for he is not a moralist, nor does he attempt studies of psychology and temperament; he presents the slum surroundings, not as the background, but as the main theme. It is a serious theme, too, plainly spoken. Slums and poverty were not, of course, new to literature; they were in Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell and Charles Kingsley, or, nearer to hand, in books like Walter Besant's *Children of Gideon*—a romance in the dismal East End setting of Hoxton which is at the same time a plea for social reform; and in Gissing's *The Nether World* there are descriptions of Pennyloaf Candy's wretched home in Clerkenwell which foreshadow Morrison's *Child of the Jago*. But Morrison was the first to set out deliberately to record slum life as it really was: "In my East End stories," he said, "I determined that they must be written in a different way from the ordinary slum story. They must be done with austerity and frankness, and there must be no sentimentalism, no glossing over. I felt that the writer must never interpose himself between his subject and his reader. I could best bring in real life by keeping myself and my . . . moralizings out of it. For this I have been abused as hard and unsympathetic, but I can assure you it is far more painful for me to write stories than for you to read them." How far in this attitude he saw himself as part of a literary trend it is difficult to say, for he was undoubtedly aware of the realistic movement and had seen its possibilities; he belonged to his time. Yet he was a journalist rather than a man of letters, and literary historians are sometimes prone to over-emphasize "influences"; however much he may have read of contemporary English and French realism, his

primary inspiration came without question direct and at first hand from his own experience in the East End.

The People's Palace, founded by Walter Besant, had been opened at Mile End in 1887, and Morrison worked for many years as Secretary of the People's Palace Trust, being a close friend of its Chairman, Sir Edmund Currie, and living, as he said, "in the very heart of that part of London". When he turned to journalism it was from these days that he drew material for his tales. The publication of the first of them in *Macmillan's Magazine* attracted the attention of W. E. Henley, then editing the famous *National Observer*. Morrison wrote, at Henley's request, further short stories which appeared in the *National Observer* and were later collected into the one volume: *Tales of Mean Streets*. Henley was an exacting editor; he demanded brevity, inciseness and finish from his contributors, and Morrison, though he wrote many more stories, does not again achieve the variety and skill of these sketches and descriptive incidents, drawn objectively, but with a strong undercurrent of feeling, and detailing facets of East End life—its brutality, its heartlessness, its shoddy gentility and grey monotone. The first tale: "A Street"—where he tries to paint the empty sameness of average slum life, is perhaps the least successful, though it struck an original note when it was written, but there is a touch of genuine drama ending the story "In Business", as the patient, stupid husband, driven at last to protest against his wife's nagging victimization, walks out quietly one morning and leaves her; a touch of comedy in the lighter treatment of a similar relationship in "That Brute Simmons"—a tale which he afterwards dramatized. There is the stringent cynicism of "Conversion", in which light-fingered Scuddy Lond slips neatly back to iniquity after an emotional spasm of grace in the local mission hall; or the unblinking horror of "Lizerunt" (once christened, but long forgotten as, Elizabeth Hunt), her courtship and marriage. They are plain tales in plain language, in which, from a present-day vantage-point, it is easier to see omissions than achievement, since there is neither subtlety nor sophistication, depth of character study nor creation of mood, no sensuous appeal nor lyric grace. They possess, on the other hand, a firm and even economy of line, etched with a dry restraint which can deepen into caustic terseness; the subject-matter is genuine, the treatment honest, and, while in accordance with his purpose he sternly avoids emotionalism and sensationalism, he is never detached—the pressure of his own keen feeling is perceptible, strengthening his style.

The short story was becoming a popular form, and realism was a new vogue; *Tales of Mean Streets*, in addition to their intrinsic merit, came

appropriately. Critics were impressed, and the author's reputation was established. Other writers like W. Pett Ridge and Edwin Pugh pursued the "mean street" theme in sketches of suburban types—shop girls, clerks, domestic servants, but played for Cockney comedy rather than serious comment. Nearer to Morrison in spirit were Richard Whiteing, who wrote *No. 5. John Street* as a picture of life in a London tenement, and Somerset Maugham, whose first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*, was in 1897 considered shockingly daring and quite improper for young ladies, since it told of an illicit love affair followed by a miscarriage. The style in its immature simplicity is tepid beside Morrison's, although the gift of sharp and accurate observation, the acute interest in people and their behaviour, which were ultimately to make him a more accomplished writer, are already apparent. Morrison took his own East End studies further two years later in a full-length novel, *Child of the Jago*. The Jago was his name for that part of Shoreditch known as the Nichol, from the name of Old Nichol Street, and it comprised the Boundary Lane area skirted by the Shoreditch High Street and the Bethnal Green Road. Nothing of it remains today except the faded name-plate of Old Nichol Street; there is merely a commonplace agglomeration of shops, houses, prefabs, and bomb damage, buttressed by the stolid barrack-like buildings of the L.G.C. housing estate. Contemporary nineteenth-century reports, however, described it as "a nest of vice and disease" comprising "congeries of filthy and insanitary courts and alleys", and it was a notorious slum. It is claimed by those who know Morrison's book and something of the background against which it was written, that its publication was finally responsible for urging the London County Council to act and clear this district; unfortunately the compliment is without foundation, for the facts disprove it. The L.C.C. had been formed in 1889, and had started slum clearance in this part of Shoreditch as a pressing priority in 1891. Morrison himself stated, in a long interview in the *Daily News* for December 12th, 1896, that when he first went to the Nichol it was "on the point of being pulled down", although encroachment was slow. He lived in the Nichol, working and talking with the inhabitants, for eighteen months, and his novel is a record of his experience, which he completed in 1896 "just as the last houses were coming down". Building of the new estate began immediately, and it was opened by the Prince of Wales in 1900. Yet, although Morrison could not be credited with instigating the reform, he did receive tribute for commemorating it, for the Prince when speaking at the opening ceremony said that "few, indeed, will forget this site who have read Mr.

Morrison's pathetic tale of *Child of the Jago*." Certainly the book made its mark, and its frank honesty may have influenced later housing schemes. It is as a sidelight on social history rather than as a novel that it is now valuable; the Jago, though vanished, is as symptomatic as Gin Lane. As a novel, the book is but average, but as a documentary it is illuminating. Critics complained, not without reason, of the technical faults in construction, and deplored the unpleasantness of the subject-matter, shifting a little uneasily, no doubt, before such an uncompromising statement of the facts, while Morrison in reply agreed that the Nichol was one of the isolated plague spots and not typical of the sheer dreariness of most East End life, which was "respectable to the gloomiest point of monotony"; on the other hand, he rewarded his critics with chapter and verse for the origin of some of the incidents they had picked out as improbable: "Critics have considered that Sally Green, my fighting heroine, was exaggerated. Indeed she is not. She is alive now, and her particular mode of fighting . . . is spoken of to this hour." Glass bottles, deliberately broken and jagged, were "quite a feature of East End life" as aggressive weapons. Those who argued that he had "nothing new to say" and that in any case the evil he exposed was already being remedied were answered in the preface to a later edition of the novel, as well as in newspaper articles: "I have remarked in more than one place the expression of a foolish fancy that because the houses of the old Jago have been pulled down the Jago difficulty has been cleared out of the way. That is far from being the case. The Jago, as mere bricks and mortar, is gone. But the Jago in flesh and blood still lives. . . ." Slum clearance was only the first step in social reform, which would not be really effective until organized and authoritative action was taken for dealing with the human problem which the slums produced.

Morrison's intention in writing the book can also be given in his own words. It was "to tell the story of the horrible Nichol . . . and of a boy who, but for his environment, would have become a good citizen". The tale is of Dicky Perrott, whose parents, though once boasting an honest if shabby livelihood, have sunk to Jago level. The mother is an inert weakling, the father a thief. Dicky, too, shows an early aptitude for theft which is promptly exploited by the cunning fence, Aaron Weech, while his childish gropings towards a better way of life are fostered by the local missionary, Father Sturt, who finds him a job as a shop boy in the Bethnal Green Road. The evil Mr. Weech, however, thereby losing a client, negotiates the boy's dismissal, and Dicky, bewildered and only half-comprehending the forces stronger than himself, returns to his old haunts,

accepting the Jago dictum: "Spare nobody and stop at nothing, for the Jago's got you, and it's the only way out, except the gaol and the gallows." The father, Josh Perrott, does end on the gallows for murdering Aaron Weech, but Dicky is knifed in a street brawl and so is spared the worst excesses of Jago life.

Morrison had excellent narrative skill, and could reproduce all the pert pungency of the Cockney dialect. His style is swift and direct, his descriptions forceful. Yet one of his critics¹ put the paradoxical view that, in spite of the realistic immediacy, the final effect of the book was one of unreality, which led him to suggest that Morrison could succeed better within the compass of the short story than in the full-length novel. That the latter was not the case Morrison was to prove when he wrote *The Hole in the Wall*, but the paradox holds, and can be explained. As in *Tales of Mean Streets* the author was writing from deep conviction about what he knew, but what in the former work was a source of strength is here a source of weakness. His very feeling about his subject blunts his vision, leading him to record rather than interpret his experience. He is too near to be able to shed irrelevancies and distil the essential features, or to illuminate the heart of his story by throwing it into relation with a broader background. His emotions are too violent to be a creative inspiration; they break through, upsetting poise and perspective, leading him into acid sarcasm, or over-description. He seeks to emphasize by repetition rather than selection. He portrays facts, but not the motives which underlie them, and material circumstance alone does not make a living novel any more than genuine cups and saucers on the stage made a living drama; it is the old confusion between realism and reality. We are led ingeniously on through a series of vivid incidents, but one street fight follows another very like it—Morrison was an expert boxer himself, and no doubt enjoyed describing what he understood so well—but in the end we have arrived nowhere; we have experienced movement without progression. In the same way, his characters live in sharp and convincing outline, but they do not grow; they are solid enough when in action, but revert to pasteboard stuff when they have to think or feel. Dicky Perrott is a real child when he steals the Bishop's watch or runs for his life from his pursuers, but when faced with an emotional experience tends to become mawkish or theatrical. Morrison's ability to create character was limited to what was outwardly visible; had he had George Eliot's

¹H. D. Traill: The new fiction, and other essays on literary subjects. Hurst & Blackett, 1897.

penetrating insight into character, he might have drawn a child as memorable as Maggie Tulliver, for he had a theme full of potentialities.

Morrison had been introduced to the Nichol by the Reverend Osborne Jay, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Shoreditch, a man for whom he had profound affection and respect, and he dedicated the book to him, incorporating him in the Jago story as Father Sturt. Jay must indeed have been a man of fine and powerful character, for since his appointment to the living in 1886 he had carried out reforms in the face of heartbreaking odds which eventually won the acknowledgement even of the Jagos: "He had an influence among them such as they had never known before. . . . The mean cunning of the Jago, subtle as it was, and baffling to most strangers, foundered miserably before his relentless intelligence, and crafty rogues . . . soon gave up all hope or effort to deceive him. . . . Thus he was respected. . . . Then there became apparent in him qualities of charity and loving-kindness, well-judged and governed, that awoke in places a regard that was in a way akin to affection." Offset against this are sarcastic criticisms of the church mission and popular philanthropy, whether justified or not it is not easy to say at this distance; certainly the Shoreditch Committee of the London Charity Organization Society was admitting defeat in 1888: "An examination of cases has shown a great mass of hopeless poverty, with which private charity is not strong enough to cope. . . . In many instances efforts were made to help, but the results have not been encouraging. . . ." In face of the dire need for drastic and official social reforms, Morrison had no use for fashionable "slumming" or for genteel charity operated from a safe distance, and he had seen the futility of the methods of the sentimental pietist in a district like the Nichol where poverty bred crime and criminal bred criminal in rapid and progressive deterioration. "The false sentiment of the day is the curse of the country", he wrote in one newspaper article,¹ and he aimed to show that "Father Jay's method is the only one it is possible to employ in such a district". If the book is a social indictment, it is also a tribute to a man's work.

Those who did not care for hard facts in fiction could choose elsewhere, and the choice was wide and varied. There were the early stories of Kipling, glowing with unfamiliar colour; the gentler mood of Barrie, or Kenneth Grahame; *The Time Machine* had appeared in 1895 and was quickly followed by more of Wells's scientific romances, while those who preferred historical romance could turn to Anthony Hope, Gilbert Parker, or Stanley Weyman, and Marie Corelli's unique

¹ *Daily News*, 12th December, 1896.

sensationalism was drawing its own readers—*The Sorrows of Satan*, produced in 1895, reached its fortieth reprint within a few years. Emerging as a new genre was the detective story, for Arthur Conan Doyle had won immediate popularity with the first Sherlock Holmes stories in the late 1880's and early 90's, and readers who had enjoyed these could turn back to Arthur Morrison for further adventures in the same vein. He came as a quick successor to Conan Doyle, and alongside *Tales of Mean Streets* in 1894 came a close imitation of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in *Martin Hewitt, Investigator*. This in turn was continued in further volumes as the *Adventures* and *Chronicles* of the same hero. The comparison with Conan Doyle, who is still good entertainment, is an amusing one. Hewitt and his staunch friend, Brett, replace Holmes and the blunt-witted Watson, and Brett, like Watson, acts as the chronicler of his brilliant friend's exploits. Hewitt, like Holmes, is encyclopaedic. As Holmes has only to see a Chinese tattoo mark to launch into a description of the art, so Hewitt is equally fluent on Chinese seals or the chemical decomposition of burnt boot buttons, and proves himself just as instantaneous in decoding a cypher or summing up a character's past history from his personal appearance. In short, "Hewitt's infallible intuition", as his *Times* critic phrased it, "is positively stupefying". Morrison copied Doyle's method of exposition by explanatory narrative dialogue which is long and sometimes unwieldy, though Morrison could write good dialogue when on his own ground, as his Cockney stories show. Conan Doyle's style in general is crisper than Morrison's, and the incidents he invents are more bizarre and exotic. Hewitt does not possess Holmes's exceptional flair for disguises, nor is he ever called in to help the crowned heads of Europe out of their intrigues. Sherlock Holmes's creator endowed him with an eccentric personality: a tall, spare figure with pipe and silk dressing-gown, aquiline features and long, nervous fingers, with moody and unpredictable habits and a fondness for solving his problems by sitting up all night smoking, cross-legged on a pile of silk cushions. Morrison, on the contrary, insists on the ordinariness of his detective; Hewitt is just a plain fellow, an ex-barrister enjoying a hobby, a "pleasant and companionable" chap, of ordinary height and even inclined to stoutness; in detective literature he marks a distinct break-away from the established eccentric type of crime-investigator. Working in a plainer style than Holmes, he deals with more homely crimes, which, in fact, recur a little monotonously, as do the attendant circumstances of burnt papers, forged cheques and locked doors. Morrison is not very inventive, and does not stray far from jewel robberies, forgery and simple murder,

although in a later sequence, *The Red Triangle*, Hewitt does have to pit his wits against a dangerous hypnotist, and Morrison gives the genre a new twist in *The Dorrington Deed-box*, where the unravelling of crime is done by Dorrington as a fake inquiry-agent who turned his talents to his own profit. Moreover, he avoids cheap sensationalism, and the incident in *The Dorrington Deed-box* where the dupe wakes up to find himself drowning in an iron tank and is rescued miraculously at the last minute by a workman providentially employed next door, is a rare lapse from his usual good sense. To modern readers these early detective stories seem unsubtle in their directness and one-sided in their purely intellectual exercise, forerunners in period dress of what is now an ingenious and intricate literature; yet they have their assured place in the history of detective fiction. Sherlock Holmes has become immortal, and though Martin Hewitt will not be known to many readers, the historian recognizes that Morrison's sound style and good craftsmanship was a solid contribution to a genre which was too readily debased by third-rate hack-writing.

Detective stories were a diversion. Morrison returned at the close of the century to an authentic background of an entirely different kind from the East End of London in his next two novels: *To London Town* and *Cunning Murrell*. The former is competent but undistinguished, employing his knowledge of Epping Forest and the stretch of country through Leytonstone into north-east London to Blackwall Cross and Harbour Lane, where the widowed Mrs. May comes to find a livelihood in shopkeeping while her son Johnny is apprenticed as a ship engineer. *Cunning Murrell* is well worth remembering as a real record of witchcraft in Essex in the 1850's, against a background of smuggling around the coast of Leigh and Hadleigh, which were then quiet rural backwaters. It is incredible but true that in such parts of Essex belief in witchcraft lingered throughout the nineteenth century and even into the twentieth. Contemporary newspapers provide evidence of actual cases brought before the local courts from time to time, as near our own day as 1908. The real James Murrell, the original of Morrison's novel, belongs to the mid-nineteenth century period, and he lived in Hadleigh as a shoemaker by trade, who made an additional income by telling fortunes, casting spells, and discovering witches, and, as a practising herbalist, by administering drugs and potions. He was widely known and feared for his occult powers, and when he died in 1860 a large number of letters and papers were disclosed which revealed the extent of his practices and influence. Morrison had seen these—he mentions them in his foreword—

and it is from them that he weaves this tale of how Murrell casts out an innocent old woman as a witch, with the intricate train of events which follow. In spite of its unusual and potentially sinister theme, it is more genial in tone and better-made as a novel than *Child of the Jago* and with descriptions of Hadleigh, its castle and Essex landscape as a background the story flows with just sufficient movement, mystery and suspense to keep the reader turning the next page, the next chapter, to the end.

Morrison knew his Essex as intimately as he knew his East End. He had married in 1892 and probably settled at Loughton soon afterwards, for we find him giving an address there in 1896, though of course he continued for many years to work in London. His connection with the People's Palace Trust ended in 1902 when Sir Edmund Currie resigned the chairmanship, and he devoted all his time to journalism, working on the editorial staff of a London newspaper. Later his Essex address changes to High Beech, in the heart of Epping Forest, where W. W. Jacobs also lived. No doubt his best writing went into newspaper articles which were often unsigned or written under an assumed name, for although in the Edwardian period he published further collections of short stories: *Divers Vanities Green Ginger* and *The Green Eye of Goona*, they do not disclose any development of talent, but repeat, albeit skilfully, the same patterns grouped round earlier East End characters, or those Essex characters which appeared in *Cunning Murrell*. His former trenchancy has gone, and here comedy is uppermost, resting on Cockney humour which exploits situation and dialogue, in which there is much genuine comedy in spite of a tendency to jauntiness. One misses the warmer, more human, quiet comedy of Jacobs.

He did, however, write one more full-length novel, which V. S. Pritchett has claimed to be "one of the minor masterpieces of this century". This is a just estimate of *The Hole in the Wall*, though out of focus, for the book belongs to its period and it would be a truer definition to call it a "minor Edwardian masterpiece". The Hole in the Wall is a public-house, in the notorious Radcliffe Highway of the mid-nineteenth century, which by 1902, when the book was written, had been purged and re-named St. George Street. The tale is of the small orphaned boy, Stephen, who is brought up there by his grandfather, and surrounded by murder, violence and swindling. Morrison can be trusted to deal with a sensational theme unsensationally, and the economy and quiet forcefulness with which the sinister plot unfolds produce a vivid, concise narrative; indeed, this narrative gift, always his first asset, is here seen at its best.

Instead of the unrelieved sordidness which marred the after-effect of *Child of the Jago*, the dark episodes are lightened by comedy, derived from the flowing Cockney dialogue with which he is always at home, and in particular from the character of Mr. Cripps, the scoundrel artist who haunts the pub for what he can gain and who cannot resist interfering—to his own ultimate discomfort—in other people's affairs. Such moments are among Morrison's most enjoyable, and one remembers the incident in the otherwise tepid story of *To London Town* where the pretentious Mr. Butson is accosted on dockside by the half-drunk Emma Pacey and badgered to lend her twopence. It is broad, simple comedy, but effective.

Morrison's device of telling the *The Hole in the Wall* story partly as "Stephen's tale" and partly as direct narrative is an imaginative stroke which heightens the effect considerably. Intensity and perspective vary as the angle of vision shifts from the child's personal story to the author's, lighting the stage now this way, now that, as, for example, where the screams of the woman who has fallen over a certain dead body which she dreaded finding in the dark, are heard in Blue Gate by the last pub-stragglers and at the same time by Stephen, lying in bed listening with innocence but apprehension to the creaking house. The honest simplicity of the child's nature throws an even murkier shadow over the evil which surrounds him.

The central theme is the change wrought in Grandfather Nat—by no means a virtuous character—by his incurred responsibility towards the child, and by the child's unquestioning affection for him. It has already been suggested that Morrison's ability to draw character was limited, and that although his people live and move with enough conviction to propel the story, they do not develop, but then portrayal of temperament and personal relationship was not his first concern. He draws types rather than individuals, and having drawn them, tends to repeat the pattern, or he will draw a slightly eccentric personality by emphasizing one feature at the expense of the rest, so giving characters like Aaron Weech in *Child of the Jago* or Long Hicks in *To London Town* a superficial Dickensian resemblance—superficial, because the two authors have little really in common except their social anger and London background. In *The Hole in the Wall* however, he achieves a much closer interrelation of character and event than hitherto, and attempts to show, at least in the case of Grandfather Nat, a character modified by experience. Furthermore, action springs from character as well as from incident: it is Mag's devotion to Dan Ogle—her one virtue—which ironically focuses

suspicion on him ; it is Mr. Cripps's officious self-importance which precipitates the unmasking of Mrs. Grimes ; it is the enraged vanity of Blind George, who, malicious as he is towards others, cannot bear taunts about his own blindness, which incenses him to blind Dan Ogle in revenge, and indirectly to change the end of the story. In the other novels characters were either good or bad ; here at times they suggest a deeper complexity, with moods of doubt and fear.

The author's descriptive method is direct photography—a recording of things as they are. That this is not always successful is illustrated by his description of the notorious pub, for he devotes a page to drawing its twisted geometry, whereas a few significant strokes and a touch of imagery would have created for the reader a less exact but more impelling impression. But such instances are few, and are more than offset by the controlled incisiveness of such scenes as Mag's journey across Limehouse flats, the blinding of Dan Ogle, or the fire which destroys the public-house. These, and passages from his other East End books, leave memorable pictures of the London river with its docks and wharfs, its warehouses and murky dockside streets, its marshy flats and sullen skies, of slum squalour and the humdrum traffic of poverty.

After the excellence of *The Hole in the Wall* Morrison's failure to develop as an Edwardian novelist is disappointing, and possible reasons for this are by now apparent ; he was, in the final count, a skilled craftsman rather than a creative artist, and lacked the imaginative power to sustain original work ; moreover, he was a busy practising journalist and perhaps had neither the time nor the ambition to attempt literary eminence. One further reason may have lain in the fact that he was at this time compiling a work of very different dimensions. Morrison devoted his spare time to the collection of works of art, and he was a keen connoisseur not only of English painting, but also, and of more importance, of Oriental art. His last published work before he retired in 1913 was a two-volume survey of the painters of Japan, which became, and is still regarded as, a leading work on the subject, while his fine collection of Chinese and Japanese drawings was acquired by the British Museum on his retirement.

His career as a writer was therefore over, but his interest in literature by no means waned. After the 1914-18 war he returned from Epping Forest to live in London, and settled in Cavendish Square, off Regent Street. In December, 1924, through his close friendship with Sir Henry Newbolt, he was elected a member of the Royal Society of Literature by unanimous invitation of its Council. Eleven years later he was invited to

join the Council itself, on which he served as a keen and active member until his death in his Buckinghamshire home in 1945.

It was perhaps the circumstance of his death, together with the returning taste for this period of literature, which brought about the re-issue of his best work, and present-day readers owe much to publishers like Eyre and Spottiswoode, whose *Century Library* series is designed to save such authors as Morrison from oblivion, for they deserve to be reinstated on our bookshelves. Yesterday's best-sellers can be more than today's curiosities; with an assured and honest craftsman they exhibit talents which both inform and entertain.

